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STARS AND STRIPES

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50¢/Free to Deployed Areas



U.S. Army

Victory Wellness launched one year ago at Fort Riley, Kan., to provide soldiers time every other week to work on team building, mental and emotional strength and forming relationships. Training can include team sports and physical activity, difficult discussions or volunteer work.

'We owe it to our soldiers'

Fort Riley mandates counseling sessions to help battle suicide, stigma of seeking help

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

The way that Douglas Sims spoke to his wife was unusual.

It was 2011 and the two were sitting at a table as their daughter practiced with her swim team. They had a rare year "off" from Army life for Sims, then a lieutenant colonel, to participate in a fellowship at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

He was six months removed

from a deployment to Afghanistan where he commanded the 1st Squadron, of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment. He had just two days between leaving command in Germany and arriving in a "completely different world" for his fellowship.

"Are you OK?" his wife, Fay asked. The way that he spoke sounded off, she told him.

"Of course, I'm OK. Why wouldn't I be OK?" Sims said he shot back to her.



Sims

order, behavioral health and the importance of taking time to build mental strength, just as he has taken time each morning of his Army career to build physical strength.

But the question stayed with him and over the remaining time in his fellowship, reshaped his own understanding of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Sims, now a major general, can draw a line from his wife's question to the mental fitness policies that he enforced later during his brigade command, and through to the current policies that he enacted last year after taking command of the 1st Infantry Division and Fort Riley, Kan.

Soon after hearing his wife's concern, Sims said he took his post-deployment health assess-

SEE COUNSELING ON PAGE 5

AFGHANISTAN

Biden defends US exit

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A defiant President Joe Biden on Tuesday defended his decision to leave Afghanistan and bring a nearly 20-year war to an end.

Biden pushed back against critics who have scrutinized his judgment and argued he took missteps that created the chaotic situation in Afghanistan during the past few weeks.

Aiming to silence those critics, Biden contended his choices regarding Afghanistan had been limited by former President Donald Trump's agreement with the Taliban to withdraw U.S. troops. He said he faced two choices: follow the agreement of the previous administration or send in more U.S. troops to escalate the war.

"That was the choice, the real choice, between leaving or escalating," Biden said. "I was not going to extend this forever war, and I was not extending a forever exit."

SEE BIDEN ON PAGE 7



EVAN VUCCI/AP

President Joe Biden speaks about the end of the war in Afghanistan at the White House on Tuesday in Washington.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Owners frustrated when linking phones to cars

Associated Press

DETROIT — Automobile quality rose last year, but glitches in pairing smartphones with infotainment systems frustrated owners more than anything, according to a large U.S. survey of auto owners.

For the first time, a brand from Fiat Chrysler, now Stellantis, ranked No. 1 for having the fewest problems. Ram trucks finished first, followed by another company brand, Dodge, according to the annual survey by J.D. Power. Lexus, Mitsubishi, Nissan, Kia, Genesis,

Hyundai, Jeep and Chevrolet rounded out the top 10 brands.

Smartphone connections, mainly linking Android Auto and Apple CarPlay to automobiles, was this year's top problem. It beat voice recognition as the survey's No. 1 gremlin for the first time since 2011.

Automakers have been trying to link phones to cars for more than a decade, yet the problem persists, said Dave Sargent, J.D. Power's vice president of automotive quality.

"People see that their phone

works fine by itself, but when they come to connect it to the vehicle, go through the Wi-Fi system, that's where the problems exist," Sargent said.

Consumers quickly blame their vehicle, but tech companies are part of the problem and should share some of the burden in solving it, he said. About one-third of vehicles on the market in the United States have the ability to link to Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, and the problem is pervasive with all manufacturers, Sargent said.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		South Korea (Won)	
Euro costs (Sept. 2)	\$1.16		1,156.74
Dollar buys (Sept. 2)	0.8235	Switzerland (Franc)	.9149
British pound (Sept. 2)	\$1.34	Thailand (Baht)	32.29
Japanese yen (Sept. 2)	107.00	Turkey (New Lira)	8,2906
South Korean won (Sept. 2)	1,130.00		

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

Commercial rates		INTEREST RATES	
Bahrain (Dinar)	.3736	Prime rate	3.25
Britain (Pound)	1.3794	Interest Rates Discount rate	0.75
Canada (Dollar)	1.2602	Federal funds market rate	0.09
China (Yuan)	6.4611	3-month bill	0.04
Denmark (Krone)	6.2784	30-year bond	1.93
Egypt (Pound)	15.7004		
Euro	.8443		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7758		
Hungary (Forint)	294.03		
Israel (Shekel)	3.2038		
Japan (Yen)	109.94		
Kuwait (Dinar)	.3006		
Norway (Krone)	8.6731		
Philippines (Peso)	49.96		
Poland (Zloty)	3.81		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7504		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3447		

WEATHER OUTLOOK

THURSDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



THURSDAY IN EUROPE



FRIDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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MILITARY

Navy announces latest grooming standards

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Sailors can now sport several new hairstyles based on new grooming standards that the Navy announced Tuesday.

The service has officially sanctioned flat-tops, faded and bald hairstyles in addition to the traditional “high and tight” look for male sailors, the Navy said in a statement. Sideburns are also authorized, but not for bald sailors.

Women are now allowed to have “very short hair styles” that show the scalp, but “razor-cut bald styles are not authorized except when prescribed for treating medical conditions.”

“This gives women more options for greater ease on hair care, especially while on deployment when longer styles can be tougher to maintain,” said Rob Carroll, who is in charge of Navy uniform matters. “Female sailors have been asking for this flexibility.”

While some sailors might have donned these looks already, the new standards spell out what’s ac-

cepted to “eliminate inconsistency” and “provide clearer guidance that will facilitate compliance and enforcement,” Carroll said.

The uniform policy updates come after Navy leaders listened to “fleet feedback, uniform group discussions and command-sponsored requests,” Vice Adm. John Nowell, the chief of naval personnel, said Tuesday in a message to the force.

“Navy uniform policy updates directly support Sailor 2025 objectives to attract and retain the very best sailors by finding greater flexibility in our policies and practices, including uniforms,” Nowell said, referencing the Navy’s personnel management modernization program.

In addition to hairstyles, the new standards allow punctuation marks in name tags and tape for sailors whose legal names contain accents. The standards also permit male sailors to wear earrings while on leave or liberty while wearing civilian clothes. In addition, female sailors can now wear heels up to 3 inches in height,

from 2 and 5/8 inches.

Smartwatches and fitness trackers are also now allowed to be worn as watches, but they “are subject to applicable security regulations” as some contain GPS and other tracking technology, according to the updated uniform policy.

The new standards also laid out acceptable colors for eyeglasses and sunglasses frames. Sailors may now wear silver, gray, black, navy blue, brown, gold or translucent glasses frames. However, straps to secure the glasses can only be used “for foreign object debris prevention and safety,” according to the service.

“There are just so many options available today for glasses and we needed to get some standardization of appearance in uniform,” Carroll said. “This change allows for a wide variety of options, ease of compliance and enforcement as well as maintaining a professional military appearance.”

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Uniform and Grooming Policy Updates

NAVADMIN 183/21

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY

FOR WOMEN, HAIR RULES NOW

ALLOW SHORT STYLES AND EVEN SHOWING THE SCALP. THIS INCLUDES TAPERED BACK AND SIDES OF THE HEAD. RAZOR-CUT BALD STYLES ARE NOT AUTHORIZED EXCEPT WHEN PRESCRIBED FOR TREATING MEDICAL CONDITIONS. THIS UPDATE AND MANY OTHERS CAN BE FOUND IN NAVADMIN 183/21.



U.S. Navy

The Navy grooming policy for women was updated to allow “very short hair styles” that show the scalp.

Okinawa Marine receives high praise for daring rescue

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Cpl. James Cates said he didn’t have time to think once he heard a fellow Marine’s cries for help while in the water this spring off Oku Beach on the northern tip of Okinawa.

Cates, 24, of Combat Logistics Regiment 3, had extricated himself from a strong rip current while free diving with friends around 9:45 a.m. on April 17. He said he turned to see Sgt. John Carrillo flailing in the surf behind him.

Cates jumped back into the powerful water surge and rode it out to his friend, who was spiraling farther and farther out to sea. He dragged Carrillo inch by inch back to shore in a 50-minute lifesaving rescue.

“I just wanted to get my buddy out of there,” Cates said Tuesday in his office on Camp Foster. “In-

stinctually, you just know, ‘This is something I have to do.’ It’s about doing the right thing.”

Cates’ command recently found out about the rescue and is considering a noncombat valor award; however, no decision has been made, according to 3rd Marine Logistics Group spokesman 1st Lt. Jonathan Coronel.

Cates’ commander called him an “excellent Marine” and a “role model” in an email to Stars and Stripes on Monday.

“Cpl. Cates courageously reentered the water at great personal risk to prevent a fellow Marine from being swept out into the ocean,” wrote regimental commander Col. Chris Haar. “His selfless commitment to a fellow Marine were largely unreported, because he is a humble Marine that performed the life-saving action because it was the right thing to do.”

The morning of April 17 dawned

to clear skies and blue seas, Carrillo wrote in a Facebook message to Stars and Stripes on Tuesday morning.

Cates and six friends made their way up north to free dive. As soon as they got into the water, Cates and some of the others felt the familiar pull of the rip current, Carrillo said. They began



Cates

to turn around or swim out of the surging water. Carrillo said he didn’t know any better, so kept swimming out.

“Bam, that’s when it hit me,” he recalled. “I noticed the extreme force of water pulling me out, so I decided to turn around and fight the current.”

Carrillo wore himself out after about five minutes fighting the current, he said.

“I prayed to God to help me, and boy, somehow Cates ... heard,” Carrillo said. “That man was my guardian angel that day. God sent me Cates.”

Cates reached Carrillo and immediately took charge of the situation, both men recalled. First, he unclipped Carrillo’s weight belt, letting it sink to the bottom. Then he began barking orders to his exhausted friend.

“I grabbed the back of his wet-suit and I said, ‘You’re going to swim as a I swim,’” Cates said.

Carrillo looked terrified and was hyperventilating, Cates recalled. As a result, he was having trouble keeping his snorkel in his mouth.

“I had a death grip on him,” Cates said. “I knew if I let him go, that’s going to be the end of John Carrillo.”

Carrillo was exhausted, dead weight, he said. Soon, they made it back to the

reef. This time, Cates was able to hold on. He worked his way up inch by inch, pulling his friend alongside him. The current remained strong and stripped off one of his fins.

“I was kicking like my life depended on it, because it did,” Cates said.

On shore, Carrillo said, he collapsed in a heap, pale white, unable to support his own weight with his exhausted limbs. Cates said he continued to move as if he was still flailing about in the water.

“I owe that man my life,” Carrillo said, remembering what Cates said in the immediate aftermath of the rescue.

“He said, ‘Never be scared of anything, man. God’s got a plan for you. If you’re going to take anything from this day, just keep on living, man; just keep on living.’”

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Former Navy officer pleads guilty in wide-spanning scandal

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — A retired Naval officer admitted in federal court in San Diego to sending a Malaysian defense contractor classified ship schedules for the Navy’s 7th Fleet in exchange for more than \$45,000 in bribes, including stays at luxury hotels.

Retired Chief Warrant Officer Robert Gorsuch also admitted Tuesday in court that he set up a

secret email account to help the ship servicing business of Leonard Francis.

Prosecutors said the firm, Singapore-based Glenn Defense Marine Asia and its owner, known by his nickname “Fat Leonard,” bribed Navy officers with fancy gifts, trips and prostitutes to provide classified information in order to beat competitors and overcharge for servic-

es.

The scheme cost the Navy some \$35 million.

“Gorsuch essentially sold his honor for a few nights at the Shangri-La,” Acting U.S. Attorney Randy Grossman said.

Gorsuch and his lawyer could not be immediately reached for comment.

The case has resulted in federal criminal charges against 34

Navy officials, defense contractors, including Francis, and the Glenn Defense Marine Asia corporation. So far, 26 of those have pleaded guilty.

Gorsuch was one of nine members of the U.S. Navy’s 7th Fleet indicted in March 2017 for playing a role in one of the Navy’s worst corruption scandals.

The eight other 7th Fleet defendants, who are accused of

trading military secrets and substantial influence for sex parties with prostitutes, extravagant dinners and luxury travel, are scheduled for trial on Nov. 1.

They include U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Bruce Loveless; Capt. David Newland, James Dolan, Donald Hornbeck and David Lausman; Col. Enrico DeGuzman; Lt. Commander Stephen Shedd; and Cmdr. Mario Herrera.

MILITARY

Infantryman aiming for gold at Paralympics

By SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

CAMP ASAKA, Japan — A wounded Afghanistan war veteran whose Vietnamese parents came to America after their homeland was overrun by communists in 1975 is shooting for Team USA at the Tokyo Paralympics this week.

Staff Sgt. Kevin Nguyen, 28, of Westminster, Calif., lost his lower right leg after stepping on a bomb on Feb. 2, 2013. He was serving in Kandahar province, Afghanistan, with the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

It's the sort of injury that might end a military career, but Nguyen is still in uniform and trained for the games as a member of the elite Army Marksmanship Unit.

On Wednesday he was among



AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Kevin Nguyen prepares to fire during a Tokyo Paralympics shooting event at Camp Asaka, Japan, on Wednesday.

dozens of Paralympic competitors shooting air rifles at targets inside a hall at the Asaka Shooting Range in Saitama prefecture, Japan.

Nguyen narrowly missed qualifying for the finals of the 10-meter prone air rifle event. He will have another chance to win a medal when he competes in an outdoor

competition at a range of 50 meters alongside Army teammate Staff Sgt. John Joss, 38, of Corsicana, Texas, on Sunday.

The conditions for that event are likely to help the soldiers, Nguyen told Stars and Stripes at the range after Wednesday's indoor competition.

"We train at Fort Benning (home of the Army Marksmanship Unit) and always have access to the outdoor range," he said. "Being able to read the wind and shoot in it comfortably gives us an advantage."

In combat Nguyen engaged the Taliban with his M-4 rifle, which has a lot more kick than the .177-caliber air rifle he used during the Paralympic contest, he said.

"We were out on patrol, and we were attacked," he said of one gunbattle with insurgents. "We did what we are trained to do and returned fire."

The major difference between that sort of shooting and the Paralympics is not being in harm's way, Nguyen said.

"When I go outside the wire, I try not to bring anything from my personal life," he said of combat. "I have to be focused on the mis-

sion."

In competitive shooting, Nguyen tries to do the same thing, he said.

A day before he competed, the last U.S. soldier in Afghanistan boarded a flight out of Kabul following the city's capture by the Taliban on Aug. 15.

Nguyen's parents came to America seeking freedom after South Vietnam fell to the communists in 1975, he said.

"I've been watching the news," he said. "I'm not in a place or position to make a difference. My focus is here at the Paralympics and not there."

The games may only mark the midpoint in Nguyen's military career, which, he hopes will include a future in Special Forces

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DODEA students in Japan get immersive cultural experiences

By JONATHAN SNYDER

Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — American students at several bases in Japan can immerse themselves in their host nation's culture, including the language and food, during educational and cultural exchange sessions this school year.

At each two-day camp, students will take part in hands-on activities designed to develop problem-solving skills, encourage a diverse perspective on the world and a sensitivity to accept others' differences, according to a recent Department of Defense Education Activity news release.

"We are always looking to provide our overseas military-connected students with opportunities to grow as global thinkers," Lois Rapp, DODEA's Pacific Region director for student excellence, said in the release. "This program allows our students to engage with their host nation peers in an educational setting that fosters collaboration and the formation of friendships."

Middle and high school students at Misawa Air Base, Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, and Sasebo and Yokosuka naval bases can apply to participate in the program.

Sessions are scheduled Oct. 2-3 and Nov. 6-7 at MCAS Iwakuni, Oct. 23-24 and Feb. 5-6 at Sasebo, Dec. 4-5 at Misawa and Jan. 22-23 at Yokosuka.

Spots are limited to 15 American and 15 Japanese students at each event and applications will be given to students about a month out, DODEA-Pacific's chief of staff, Todd Schlitz, told Stars and Stripes by phone.

"The Japanese students have some English speaking ability," he said.

"The instructors also serve as translators to help facilitate discussions and communication among the students."

The Japanese students will be chosen from schools near the bases that are hosting the event.

"It's going to be first-come first-served," Schlitz said. "We're not asking for any particular require-



DODEA

Students at Department of Defense Education Activity schools in the Pacific will soon have a chance to join Japanese students for two-day culture-exchange camps at their on-base schools.

ments. We want to make sure it's open to all students."

A great deal of coordination between DODEA and Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was required to make the sessions happen, Schlitz added.

"This program provides a great opportunity for students of Japan and the United States to forge new

friendships," Keiichi Ichikawa, director-general and assistant minister for the ministry's North American Affairs Bureau, said in the statement. "I hope they would become a bridge between our two countries."

Some students, such as Tristan Tanjuaquio, an 11th-grader at MCAS Iwakuni's Matthew C. Per-

ry High School, are showing interest in the program.

"It would be interesting to see what Japanese students my age think about living in Iwakuni and what they do here," he told Stars and Stripes last week.

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1 rescued, 5 missing after Navy helo crashes into sea near San Diego

San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — A search and rescue operation continued Wednesday morning for five sailors missing after their helicopter crashed on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln and fell into the sea, the Navy said in a statement.

One helicopter crew member was rescued from the water Tuesday and is in stable condition ashore, the Navy said. Five sailors aboard the Abraham Lincoln were also injured in the crash of the MH-60S helicopter. Two of them were also taken ashore for medical treatment.

Three of the sailors suffered minimal injuries and remain aboard the ship about 60 nautical miles off the coast of San Diego.

Search-and-rescue operations began at 4:30 p.m. about 60 nautical miles from San Diego, the 3rd Fleet said in a news release.

"Search and rescue operations are ongoing with multiple Coast Guard and Navy air and surface assets," the release said.

The Abraham Lincoln, homeported in San Diego, has been conducting carrier qualifications for F/A-18E/F Super Hornet and EA-18G

Growler fleet replacement squadrons, the Navy said Monday.

Newly designated naval aviators are being trained on the requirements of the specific aircraft they will be assigned to when they reach their fleet squadron, according to the service.

MILITARY

Counseling: Commander says program hasn't hampered readiness

FROM PAGE 1

ment and read each question more carefully.

He realized many applied to his own emotions. With the advice of a fellow officer who had attended counseling, Sims made the decision to go himself.

"I found it to be extraordinarily helpful," he said.

Shortly after arriving at Fort Riley in August 2020, Sims announced a division policy that every soldier must attend at least one counseling session a year — no matter their rank or position. It's part of a program known on base as "Victory Wellness," which also requires soldiers forgo physical training every other Tuesday to participate in mental fitness training.

Across the military, officials have created programs and initiatives to tackle mental health issues and help tackle the suicide crisis in the force. Every three months, the Defense Department releases a report on prevention efforts and the number of service members who have died by suicide.

The latest report shows that since 2014, when 273 service members died by suicide, the number of deaths has ticked upward. By 2019, the number of deaths grew to 350 and then again to 385 in 2020.

Deaths in the Army had increased, from 146 suicides in 2019 to 175 in 2020. Last year, service leaders identified suicide as one of the three corrosive behaviors that they aim to eradicate from the force along with sexual harassment and assault, and extremism.

Each death is absolutely tragic, Sims said.

"We are trying to get after every one of those," he said. "We owe it to our soldiers. We owe it to the families of our soldiers, and we owe it to our country."

Victory Wellness attacks all three corrosives, and it all begins with creating "an environment in which people feel respected, in which people feel valued, and they know that their leaders genuinely care for their well-being," Sims said.

While the counseling sessions do aim to help the 10% of soldiers who are facing problems in life, the deeper goal is to reach the 90% who are not.

"It's to help them to thrive even more, with a thought that we all end up in that 10% at some point in our lives," Sims said.

"We have marital problems, our parents get older, our children are having problems, we're physically injured, whatever that is, we're going to end up in that 10% and we hope that we're able to come out of that."

Eventually, he'd like soldiers to feel attending counseling is as normal as a trip to the dentist, which is also mandatory.



U.S. ARMY

Fort Riley, Kan., soldiers volunteered this month to improve a local school as part of the unit's requirements under Victory Wellness.

A culture shift

The pilot counseling program for Victory Wellness began in December and started with all battalion commands and above, so leaders had firsthand experience. Then in January, the effort began in earnest. More than 6,500 soldiers had been through counseling as of August. In total, about 15,000 soldiers are assigned to the Kansas base.

The past 10 years of Sims' career had been building toward this policy, but his timing lined up with the Army turning more attention toward soldier well-being.

He arrived at Fort Riley about the time that Army Forces Command began implementing Foundational Readiness Days, one day of the month dedicated to building relationships in units.

III Corps, the Fort Hood, Texas-based headquarters that is part of Fort Riley's chain of command, had begun the similar People First campaign to build trust among soldiers and leaders after a particularly difficult year on base.

Spc. Vanessa Guillen was killed at Fort Hood by a fellow soldier in an arms room. Her family said she faced sexual harassment on base, but was too afraid to report it.

Her death and those allegations led to two Army-initiated investigations that found significant problems with the culture on the base and a distrust and misunderstanding of programs related to sexual assault and harassment prevention and behavioral health.

III Corps commander Lt. Gen. Pat White has implemented all four divisions in his command conduct People First training in a way that matches its own culture. In July, White held a meeting where Sims, along with commanders of the 1st Armored Division at Fort Bliss, Texas, the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, and the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Carson, Colo., were able to hear the successes and challenges

of each division's separate initiatives.

From that meeting, White said, he will see what's working at each of the bases that he oversees and develop policies this fall that could spread across the corps.

"This is going to become annual, so we'll continue to learn and improve up until such point in time that it's kind of normal," White said.

Consistency has been a major factor in earning buy-in from soldiers, said Lt. Col. Paul Godson and Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Hardy, the command team of the 3rd Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment, which is part of the 1st Infantry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team. Whether at home or in the field, the efforts have to be deliberate, and they have to be genuine, Godson said.

While he said he can't directly link the outcomes, soldiers are showing improvement in their group and individual skills. This year's gunnery performances improved over last year and about 25% of soldiers in the squadron's infantry company earn their Expert Infantryman Badge, which is up from previous years.

"During our winter gunnery we faced negative 20-degree wind chills. It was rough, but we had zero cold weather injuries," Godson said. "I attributed a lot of that to taking care of each other and having those discussions and knowing each other that much better."

They soon will deploy to Europe as part of their brigade's nine-month rotation in Operation Atlantic Resolve and expectations of Victory Wellness remain in place, including the counseling sessions.

"That's how we demonstrate to our soldiers that we're taking this seriously. The commander and I were some of the first ones to get over there and get checked on and being able to just sit there with a counselor, and just kind of talk about whatever it is that's on your mind is good," Hardy said. "It's liberating to be able to just get

some stuff off your chest with somebody who's not going to judge you."

Anecdotally, Hardy said he knew of at least 10 soldiers from their squadron who have chosen to continue seeing a counselor based on the outcome of their required visit.

To make certain the program doesn't strain resources or limit the amount of counseling appointments available for those seeking support outside of Victory Wellness, up to 10 of the base's military and family life counselors rotate through the program on 60- and 90-day rotations. They see three soldiers in the morning and three in the afternoon in one-hour blocks. They do not use behavioral health specialists or chaplains, so they remain free for in-the-moment crises, which still exist, Sims said.

The average session runs between 45 and 60 minutes, he said. There are no medical records kept or notes taken.

Measuring impact

Sims has three main goals in sending every single soldier and leader to counseling: to make people stronger, to expose everyone to the experience, and to remove the stigma associated with being seen or known as attending counseling.

Dr. Amy Adler, acting director of the Research Transition Office and senior consultant for the Center for Military Psychiatry and Neuroscience, both part of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, is studying the Victory Wellness program and the impact the mandatory counseling is having on soldiers as well as how leader participation impacts a soldier's perception of the program.

Using online surveys, the research team studies soldiers' opinions of the program and if attending a counseling session helps to reduce any preconceptions that they might have about seeking mental health support.

"It's really hard to shift those kinds of beliefs ... because these can be deeply ingrained," Adler said. "It can be part of the solution. No one thing is going to fix everything. No one intervention is going to take care of everything. This is all just sort of how can you shift in the discussion? How can you shift the culture?"

While study is ongoing, Adler has already seen when a soldier reports that their leadership attends and encourages participation in Victory Wellness, the soldier also reports finding the activities more helpful.

While the study isn't looking at why this happens, Adler said it relates back to the general understanding of the influence leaders have over subordinates.

"They lead by example," she said. "They establish priorities,

and they communicate explicitly and implicitly what matters. I think all subordinates at all levels are intuitively responsive to what the leader is doing."

The study is the second time that Adler has worked with Sims on his efforts to improve mental fitness of troops. As brigade commander of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, Sims first implemented the idea of setting aside one day of physical training every two weeks to focus on the mind and the heart.

On those days, units sometimes have difficult conversations, learn from guest speakers, and sometimes they do teamwork and community service, such as a clean-up project for the local zoo or a soccer game with kids in an underserved community. Some days include exercises that put resiliency skills and knowledge to the test.

Command Sgt. Maj. Donald Durgin served under Sims as he laid out initial concepts of Victory Wellness with the 2nd Cavalry, and now as the senior enlisted leader of the 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery Regiment, which has deployed as part of 1st Brigade's rotation in Europe. Durgin said by watching the program evolve to what it is today, he's learned it's about more than leaders just using the designated time to engage with soldiers. It's about presence and genuine interaction.

Durgin is now stationed in Poland and he said a walk throughout the base will show that leaders are present and open to engage soldiers and the community in conversation. And sometimes, it's as simple as a game of table tennis, he said.

"That could be just walking into the gym or the [recreation center], and just saying, 'Hey, what are you doing? Let's play a game,'" he said. "It starts with trash talking and everything else, and then you can see the manifestation of tranquility of calmness of wanting to be here not because they have to be, but because they want to."

Now with about a year of Victory Wellness complete in the battalion, Durgin said they've seen improved retention rates and he "100% believes" in the program's ability to create a unit where soldiers feel valued and important to the work.

In a deployed environment, he said it's crucial that soldiers feel they are each other's "family away from your family."

Through it all, Sims said he's been proud to see the program has not hampered the division's operational readiness.

"It's two sides of the same coin," he said. "We can think that we're attaining high operational readiness, but if we do it on the backs of our soldiers, then, in fact, it's going to be hollow."

VIRUS OUTBREAK

US military has 40 new positive tests in Japan, S. Korea

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Japan's capital city added another 3,168 infections to its coronavirus total Wednesday, which was fewer additional cases than a week prior for a 10th consecutive day, according to public broadcaster NHK.

Wednesday's total in Tokyo was 1,060 less than the Aug. 25 count, according to metro government data. The seven-day moving average was 3,971 and falling on Saturday, the latest data available. It reached over 4,700 in mid-August.

Japan on Tuesday reported another 17,667 newly infected people and 64 deaths, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. It reported that 45.5% of Japan's population, or 57.4 million people, are fully vaccinated.

U.S. military bases in Japan reported that 27 people had tested positive for COVID-19, the coronavirus respiratory disease, since Aug. 25.

U.S. Army Japan, headquartered at Camp Zama, 26 miles southwest of central Tokyo, had 21 people come up positive, according to an Army news release.

Five reported symptoms of COVID-19 and 15 were already quarantined as close contacts of a previously infected person. One person was tested in restricted movement after recently arriving in Japan.

Someone at Zama Middle School on Camp Zama tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday, according to a Facebook post by U.S. Army Garrison Japan. The school did not close nor were classes canceled, according to a message posted by Principal Henry Lefebvre.

Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, south of Hiroshima, had another six people come up positive since Tuesday, according to a base news release Wednesday. Three were already in restricted movement, three were not and the base provided no

further information.

South Korea update

U.S. Forces Korea had 13 new arrivals to the peninsula test positive for the coronavirus between Aug. 9 and 26, according to a news release Tuesday.

Five service members arrived at Osan Air Base on U.S. military flights on Aug. 25 and 26, and eight service members arrived on flights at Incheon International Airport between Aug. 9 and 26, according to USFK.

Nine came up positive on their first mandatory COVID-19 test and four came up positive on the test required to exit quarantine.

USFK updated its list of districts designated as red zones, areas with 50 or more confirmed COVID-19 patients per 100,000 people over seven days. Those areas are off-limits to USFK personnel.

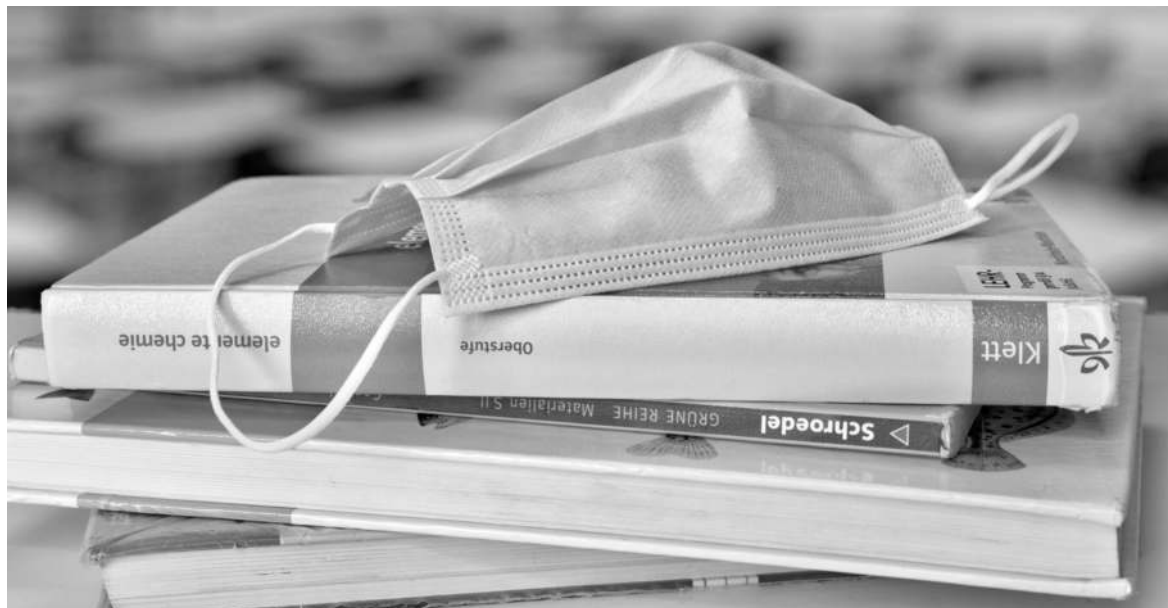
The list has grown from seven to nine districts since Saturday: Gangnam, Yeongdeungpo and Geumcheon in Seoul; Pyeongtaek, where Camp Humphreys and Osan are located; Hwacheon; Goesan; Nonsan; Jung, near Ulsan; and Jangheung.

Those who live or work in those districts may travel freely, but are encouraged to minimize their activities as much as possible.

South Korea reported another 2,025 coronavirus cases Tuesday, according to the Korean Disease Control and Prevention Agency, including 662 in Seoul and 630 in Gyeonggi province, where Humphreys and Osan are located.

Nearly 15.8 million people — 30.7% of the population — are fully vaccinated. Another 29 million, or 57%, have received the first of a two-shot vaccine regimen, according to the daily KDCA update Wednesday.

Stars and Stripes reporter Mari Higa contributed to this report.
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Pixabay

DODEA-Pacific's "Return to School Plan 2021" outlines the agency's coronavirus mitigation efforts, which include vaccinations, masks, social distancing and sanitation procedures.

Guam's DODEA schools stay open, public schools go remote

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Defense Department schools on Guam will remain open despite a coronavirus surge that recently put an end to face-to-face learning for the U.S. territory's off-base students.

Military children will continue learning in classrooms, at least while the island's military health protection condition remains at Bravo, according to Joint Region Marianas and the Department of Defense Education Activity-Pacific Far East.

Bravo indicates the virus has a moderate risk of spreading.

"Across our country, our region and the Pacific theater, cases of COVID-19 are climbing," Rear Adm. Benjamin Nicholson, commander of Joint Region Marianas, said in a news release Wednesday. "My team and I are closely monitoring the infection rate in the local DOD community and the DODEA-Guam schools, and are prepared to implement more stringent mitigation measures should the need arise."

U.S. bases in the region had 126 active cases of COVID-19, the coronavirus respiratory disease, as of Wednesday, with 84% of active-duty military personnel fully vaccinated, according to an email to Stars

and Stripes from joint region spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Katie Koenig. The region includes Naval Base Guam and Andersen Air Force Base.

A DODEA spokesperson did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment Wednesday.

DODEA-Pacific's "Return to School Plan 2021" outlines the agency's coronavirus mitigation efforts, which include vaccinations, masks, social distancing and sanitation procedures.

Schools would close and students would be taught by remote learning if the health protection condition level is raised to Charlie, one level below the most extreme condition, Delta, according to the school plan.

While DODEA schools will stay open, the remainder of the island's schools are turning to remote learning in response to rising COVID-19 cases. Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero mandated that all classes, from prekindergarten to 12th grade, must refrain from in-person education by executive order Friday.

Guerrero said coronavirus cases increased by 300% and 35 people were hospitalized in the two weeks prior to Aug. 26.

The island had confirmed 10,740 COVID-19 infections and 150 deaths during the pandemic, ac-

ording to Guam's Joint Information Center. There were 181 cases and one death announced on Wednesday evening.

"I am receiving messages and calls concerning the fears and anxieties that our parents, teachers and students are facing because of the increase in positive cases," Guerrero said in a televised statement Friday. "I recognize that our children's education is critical, but my concern for their protection comes first."

Guam has vaccinated 80% of its eligible population, or more than 108,000 people, Guerrero wrote in last week's executive order. She said the highly contagious delta variant, however, is complicating efforts to beat back the virus' continuing spread.

"Despite our community's best efforts to get vaccinated, the delta variant has proven to be a new and different enemy — it is not like the COVID of 2019 or 2020," she said in her address.

"It is far more contagious and more harmful. While the vaccine won't prevent you from getting or spreading the virus, it will help keep you out of the hospital."

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Oxygen supplies grow precarious amid ongoing surge in US

Associated Press

MISSION, Kan. — The COVID-19 surge is stretching oxygen supplies and sending hospitals scrambling for more ventilators, even as there are signs of hope that the spread of the virus is slowing down in pockets of the United States.

In Tulsa, Okla., a hospital recently called 911 after coming within just a few hours of running out of oxygen because they needed an

emergency transfer for a patient on high-flow oxygen. The hospital got a shipment later that day, but the experience was a warning to other hospitals, said Dr. Jeffrey Goodloe, the chief medical officer for the EMS system that serves Tulsa and Oklahoma City.

"If it can happen to one hospital, it can happen to any hospital," Goodloe said. "There is no, 'that is happening over there.' There is here in a heartbeat."

The oxygen shortages are yet another sign of the toll that the summer COVID-19 resurgence has taken on the nation's hospital system. A handful of states, including Florida, Oregon, Hawaii, Mississippi and Louisiana, have set pandemic records for the number of COVID-19 hospitalizations, and many hospitals are dangerously short of staff and intensive care unit beds.

There is some good news, however. The country is averaging

155,000 new infections a day, but the caseload trajectory has slowed down dramatically from earlier in August.

Florida, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi had slight declines in cases over the last two weeks. Florida has seen a dip in COVID-19 admissions in recent days, as have hospitals in Springfield, Mo., an early epicenter of the delta variant-driven surge.

Vaccination numbers are also

up, and White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients credited vaccine mandates that have been implemented across the country, including restaurants, workplaces, sports stadiums and schools.

"Importantly, we've accelerated the pace of first shots. In August, we got over 14 million. That's almost 4 million more first shots in August compared to the prior month in July," Zients said Tuesday.

AFGHANISTAN



EVAN VUCCI/AP

President Joe Biden speaks about the end of the war in Afghanistan from the White House Tuesday in Washington.

Biden: No deadline for Americans seeking exit

FROM PAGE 1

U.S. withdrawal efforts began May 1 and accelerated Aug. 15, when the Taliban overthrew the Afghanistan government and took control of Kabul, its capital city.

About 160 Afghans and 13 U.S. service members, including 11 Marines, a sailor and soldier, were killed in an attack Thursday at the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul as evacuations were ongoing. The attack, a suicide bombing, was conducted by the Afghanistan branch of the Islamic State terrorist group. In response, the U.S. killed two terrorists and injured a third in a drone strike.

Biden, arguing against his skeptics, said there would've been a panicked rush to the airport regardless of whether the evacuations started sooner.

"There is no evacuation from an end of the war that you can run without the kinds of complexities, challenges and threats we've faced," he said.

The military completed its withdrawal from the country Monday, one day ahead of the deadline set by Biden and enforced by the Taliban. The moment marked the first time in 20 years that America didn't have troops in Afghanistan.

In total, the U.S. evacuated more than 120,000 people in the past 18 days, including 5,500 Americans, Biden said.

House Republicans have criticized Biden's handling of the withdrawal, accusing him of leaving Americans behind.

An estimated 100 to 200 U.S. passport holders remain in Afghanistan, according to the State Department. Most of the Americans remaining are dual citizens who at first wanted to stay in Afghanistan because of family roots, Biden said. He said the State Department would continue to try to extricate Americans and Afghan allies out of the country and work

with Afghanistan's neighbors to secure their departure.

"The bottom line is 90% of Americans in Afghanistan who wanted to leave were able to leave," Biden said. "For those remaining Americans, there is no deadline. We remain committed to get them out if they want to get out."

Going forward, Biden vowed to support the Afghan people through diplomacy and humanitarian aid.

Biden explained his decision to withdraw from Afghanistan as critical for emerging threats. He referenced America's competition and tensions with China and the ongoing challenges with Russia.

"There's nothing China or Russia would rather have than the U.S. to be bogged down in another decade in Afghanistan," Biden said. "The fundamental obligation of the president is to defend and protect America, not against the threats of 2001, but against the threats of 2021 and tomorrow."

Biden also said America's withdrawal from Afghanistan marked an end to the era of the United States engaging in major military operations to remake other countries.

He thanked the service members who carried out the evacuation mission, as well as the nearly 800,000 veterans of the war in Afghanistan. He acknowledged the cost of the war to veterans and their families, from traumatic brain injuries to mental health issues, divorces and missed milestones.

Biden said he "refused to send another generation" to fight a war that had no clear purpose and should've ended a decade ago.

"My fellow Americans, the war in Afghanistan is now over," he said. "I believe this is the right decision, the wise decision, and the best decision for America."

Retired officers demand Austin, Milley resignations

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A group of retired military officers are calling for the resignations of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, over their handling of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The conservative group Flag Officers 4 America orchestrated the letter signed by 87 officers that accuses Austin and Milley of failing to recommend "against this dangerous withdrawal in the strongest possible terms" that left 13 U.S. troops dead.

"Conversely, if they did do everything within their ability to persuade the president to not hastily exit the country without ensuring the safety of our citizens and Afghans loyal to America, then they should have resigned in protest as a matter of conscience and public statement," the group wrote in the letter.

Eleven Marines, a sailor and a soldier and scores of Afghans were killed Thursday when an Islamic State suicide bomber detonated an explosive vest and gunmen fired on crowds near a Kabul airport gate where troops

were evacuating Americans, Afghans seeking special immigrant visas and others from Afghanistan.

The withdrawal ended in Kabul just before midnight Tuesday local time after U.S. and coalition forces evacuated more than 123,000 people from Afghanistan since late July. Most of those evacuations happened after Aug. 14, when the U.S. increased its forces at the airport to speed operations as the Taliban closed in on the capital.

Among the signatories are retired Vice Adm. John Poindexter, who served as former President Ronald Reagan's national security adviser, and one retired four-star admiral, Adm. Jerome Johnson.

At least one officer listed as having signed the letter, Marine Corps Brig. Gen. James Mead, is dead, according to his July obituary posted to the Wareham Village Funeral Home and Cremation Services website.

Flag Officers 4 America is the same organization that in May published a letter with 124 retired admirals and generals accusing President Joe Biden of launching "a full-blown assault

on our Constitution rights in a dictatorial manner" over his use of executive orders.

In its Monday letter, the group called the withdrawal "disastrous" and "hasty," claiming the Americans and vulnerable Afghans left in Afghanistan after U.S. forces left Monday are now "de facto hostages of the Taliban at this time."

Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday said between 100-200 Americans who want to leave Afghanistan were unable to get to the airport in time for evacuation.

The group of officers further alleged Austin and Milley should resign for other "leadership, training and moral reasons" related to the Pentagon's focus this year on addressing racism and extremism within the ranks.

"It has become clear that top leaders in our military are placing mandatory emphasis on [politically correct] 'wokeness' related training which is extremely divisive and harmful to unit cohesion, readiness and war fighting," the group said in its letter. "Our military exists to fight and win our nation's wars and that must be the sole focus of our top military leaders."

Milley: US coordination with Taliban on strikes 'possible'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Wednesday that it's "possible" that the U.S. will have to coordinate with the Taliban on any future counterterrorism strikes in Afghanistan against Islamic State militants or others.

The Taliban, said Milley, is a "ruthless" group, and "whether or not they change remains to be seen." He added, "In war you do what you must in order to reduce risk to mission and force, not what you necessarily want to do."

Speaking two days after the final U.S. troops left Afghanistan at the close of a turbulent and deadly evacuation of more than 124,000 American citizens, Afghans and others, Milley and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told Pentagon reporters that it's hard to predict the future of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

"I would not make any leaps of logic to broader issues," said Austin.

Both men commanded troops in

Afghanistan during the 20-year war and their comments on Wednesday largely focused on tributes to those who served, who died and who were wounded in the conflict and to those who executed the complex airlift.

With the U.S. involvement in the war over and all American military out of the country, President Joe Biden is grappling with the prospects of a new relationship with the Taliban, the Islamist militant group the U.S. toppled after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in America, and that is now once again in power in Afghanistan.

Biden has tasked Secretary of State Antony Blinken with coordinating with international partners to hold the Taliban to their promise of safe passage for Americans and others who want to leave.

Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, has described the U.S. relationship with the Taliban during the evacuation as "very pragmatic and very businesslike," saying they helped secure the airport. But other reports describe shootings, violence and Taliban moves to block desperate Afghans from getting through the gates.



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AFGHANISTAN

American still aiming to rescue Afghan dogs, staff

BY PHILIP WALTER
WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

An American who founded an animal rescue clinic in Kabul is still in Afghanistan, trying to persuade the Taliban to let her retrieve animals released by the U.S. military and airlift them out of the country with the clinic's employees.

Charlotte Maxwell-Jones was unable to board a military evacuation flight with the animals or charter a private aircraft before international troops left earlier this week.

The U.S. military released the clinic's animals from their cages in an enclosed area at the Kabul airport that had previously been used by the former Afghan army, Maxwell-Jones and a Pentagon statement said.

Maxwell-Jones founded Kabul Small Animal Rescue in 2018 to rescue strays, provide veterinary services and help ship animals abroad for adoption. American service members who befriended animals during their deployments and wanted to bring them home have been among her most steady clientele.

The Tennessee native has vowed to stay until she secures the evacuation of her staff, their family members and up to 250 cats and dogs. Maxwell-Jones said she



CHARLOTTE MAXWELL-JONES/ Facebook

Charlotte Maxwell-Jones poses with a rescue dog at Kabul's airport on Aug. 29.

has had eight charter planes canceled in recent days, costing her a substantial amount of money in nonrefundable deposits.

The entire group arrived at the airport together last week, but Taliban guards initially allowed only Maxwell-Jones and the dogs to enter. The employees were told to wait with the cats, she said.

In the end, only nine of the over 125 people associated with the clinic made it through the gates and left Afghanistan, she said. The cats returned to the clinic with staff members.

"Despite an ongoing complicated and retrograde mission, U.S. forces went to great lengths to assist the Kabul Small Animal Res-



KABUL SMALL ANIMAL RESCUE/Facebook

Cages holding dogs belonging to Kabul Small Animal Rescue sit at Kabul's airport last week. The dogs were unable to travel outside of Afghanistan and were instead released at the airport by the U.S. military.

cue as much as possible," Army Lt. Col. Karen Roxberry, a spokeswoman for U.S. Central Command said in a statement Tuesday.

But Maxwell-Jones said the military provided a lot of "unnecessary pushback" once she was inside the airport.

"All the service members on the ground were very nice," she said. "They helped take care of the animals; they took them out; they cuddled them. They were really, really great."

"But some of the higher-ups were like: 'You're using our resources. We need to get people out. Do you care about animals more than people?' I didn't ask to move animals instead of people. I said let's move them in addition."

The animals likely would have ridden in cargo spaces, she said.

Photos of some 125 dogs in carrier cages that Maxwell-Jones has been trying to ship out of Afghanistan have been circulating on social media along with accusations that American forces left their working dogs behind when they completed their withdrawal this week.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby denied the accusations Tuesday, tweeting that the military left none of its dogs and that those photographed belonged to Kabul Small Animal Rescue.

The fate of the animals, about 50 of which Maxwell-Jones described as working dogs abandoned by contractors who sup-

ported the U.S. mission, remains unknown.

"There's a decent chance that most of them are alive," she said Tuesday in a phone interview, adding that she intends to work with the Taliban, who now control the airport, to retrieve the animals.

She remains hopeful of getting both animals and staffers out of Afghanistan in the coming weeks.

And while the employees wait to depart, they will continue to work, with an extra emphasis on rescuing more contractor working dogs that are believed to have been left behind, Maxwell-Jones said.

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Congressman threatened embassy staff, officials say

BY TYLER PAGER
AND JOHN HUDSON
The Washington Post

The call to the U.S. ambassador to Tajikistan came in Monday. On the line, two U.S. officials said, was Rep. Markwayne Mullin, R-Okla., with an unusual and urgent request: He needed assistance in transporting a huge amount of cash into the country, saying he was going to neighboring Afghanistan to rescue five American citizens, a woman and her four children, stuck in the country. They planned to hire a helicopter for the effort.

Mullin told the embassy that he planned to fly from Tbilisi, Georgia, into Tajikistan's capital, Dushanbe, in the next few hours and needed the top diplomat's help, according to the two U.S. officials familiar with the incident, who requested anonymity to disclose private conversations about a sensitive matter.

The answer was no. Embassy officials told Mullin they could not assist him in skirting Tajikistan's laws on cash limits on his way to visiting one of the most dangerous places on earth.

Mullin was outraged by the response, the officials said — threatening U.S. ambassador

John Mark Pommersheim and embassy staff and demanding to know the name of staff members he was speaking with.

The episode marked Mullin's second attempt to travel to Afghanistan in as many weeks for an unauthorized evacuation effort despite the perilous security environment. Last week, Mullin traveled to Greece and asked the Department of Defense for permission to visit Kabul. The Pentagon

denied Mullin's request, an administration official said.

Mullin's behavior has alarmed top U.S. officials who say he has gone to extraordinary lengths to defy U.S. warnings. The attempt follows another unauthorized trip to Afghanistan by Reps. Seth Moulton, D-Mass., and Peter Meijer, R-Mich., last week, which Pentagon and State Department officials criticized as a public relations stunt that sapped government resources during a national-security crisis.

As of late Tuesday, U.S. officials said they were unsure of Mullin's location. Mullin's office did not respond to multiple requests for comment before this story published. After it published, Meredith Blanford, a spokeswoman for Mullin, put out a statement saying that Mullin "has been and is currently completely safe" and that he and his office "will continue to do anything in our power to bring

home all Americans from the war zone that President Biden abandoned." The statement said the office had no further comment.

The Oklahoman newspaper reported that Mullin posted a message on Instagram Wednesday saying he was heading home after "helping get Americans out of Afghanistan."

In the Instagram post, Mullin said, "I am heading home. Have we been helping get Americans out of Afghanistan. yes. Is the mission continuing, yes. Am I missing, no. Did I go dark for a little, yes because it wasn't safe to be communicating. Am I extremely disappointed in how we (United States) left Americans behind ... that would be an understatement."

"To say this is extremely dangerous is a massive understatement," said one State Department official, requesting anonymity to discuss the sensitive situation.

The remaining U.S. troops in Afghanistan left on Monday, bringing an end to America's longest war.

The U.S. military helped evacuate more than 120,000 people, including U.S. citizens, allies and at-risk Afghans. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Monday that fewer than 200 American citizens remain in Afghanistan.

The department suspended embassy operations and relocated its mission to Qatar, where diplomats are trying to find ways for the remaining Americans and at-risk Afghans in the country to leave.

The State Department reissued a level 4 travel advisory for the country on Monday urging Americans not to travel there "due to civil unrest, armed conflict, crime, terrorism, kidnapping, and COVID-19."

Unlike Moulton and Meijer, Mullin did not serve in the U.S. military.



Mullin

AFGHANISTAN

Hunger crisis adds to Taliban's challenges

By KATHY GANNON
AND RAHIM FAIEZ
Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Food stocks in Afghanistan could run out this month, a senior U.N. official warned Wednesday, threatening to add a hunger crisis to the challenges facing the country's new Taliban rulers as they endeavor to restore stability after decades of war.

About one third of the country's population of 38 million is facing "emergency" or "crisis" levels of food insecurity, according to Ramiz Alakbarov, the local U.N. humanitarian coordinator. With winter coming and a severe drought ongoing, more money is needed to feed the population, he said.

The U.N.'s World Food Program has brought in food and distributed it to tens of thousands of people in recent weeks. But of the \$1.3 billion needed for aid efforts, only 39% has been received, he said.

"The lean winter season is fast approaching, and without additional funding, food stocks will run out at the end of September," Alakbarov said.

The Taliban, who seized control of the country ahead of the withdrawal of American forces this week, now must govern a nation that relies heavily on international aid and is in the midst of a worsening economic crisis. In addition



MARKUS SCHREIBER/AP

Two girls from Afghanistan wait with other evacuees to fly to the U.S. or another safe location at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, on Wednesday. About one third of Afghanistan's population of 38 million is facing "emergency" or "crisis" levels of food insecurity, according to the local U.N. humanitarian coordinator.

to the concerns about food supplies, civil servants haven't been paid in months and the local currency is losing value. Most of Afghanistan's foreign reserves are

held abroad and currently frozen.

In the wake of the U.S. pullout, many Afghans are anxiously waiting to see how the Taliban will rule. When they were last in pow-

er, before being driven out by the U.S.-led invasion in 2001, they imposed draconian restrictions, refusing to allow girls to go to school, largely confining women to their

homes and banning television, music and even photography.

But more recently, their leaders have sought to project a more moderate image. Schools have reopened to boys and girls, though Taliban officials have said they will study separately. Women are out on the streets wearing Islamic headscarves — as they always have — rather than the all-encompassing burqa the Taliban required in the past.

While many Afghans fear a return to the Taliban's brutal rule, they are also concerned that the country's economic situation holds little opportunity — and tens of thousands sought to flee the country in a harrowing airlift.

Thousands who had worked with the U.S. and its allies, as well as up to 200 Americans, remained in the country after the efforts ended with the last U.S. troops flying out of Kabul's international airport just before midnight Monday. President Joe Biden defended his handling of the withdrawal a day later.

The challenges the Taliban face in reviving the economy could give Western nations leverage as they push the group to fulfill a pledge to allow free travel, form an inclusive government and guarantee women's rights. The Taliban say they want to have good relations with other countries, including the United States.

Veterans Crisis Line sees 'significant increase' in texts since evacuations

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The crisis hotline for veterans experienced a 98% increase in the number of texts that it received during the last two weeks of August compared to the same two weeks last year.

Calls to the Veterans Crisis Line increased 7% and online chats increased by nearly 40% during the same time period, from Aug. 13 to 29. Department of Veterans Affairs officials attribute the increase to multiple factors, including the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan and the upcoming 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

VA officials also said there's an increased awareness of the hotline since last year and there's not as much stigma about utilizing the resource.

"The more we can do to normalize discussions about crisis and suicide, that increases our call volume," said Lisa Kearney, director of the Veterans Crisis Line. "We're reaching more people to get them care and support. So, I'm thankful for it."

The VA has been tracking an increased usage of the hotline since the Taliban overthrew the Afghan-

"We're reaching more people to get them care and support. So, I'm thankful for it."

Lisa Kearney

Veterans Crisis Line director

istan government in mid-August and the United States began a frenzied effort to evacuate Americans and Afghan allies from the country. Thirteen U.S. service members were killed last Thursday in an attack on Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul by the Afghanistan branch of Islamic State. The U.S. troops were working to evacuate people.

The U.S. military ended its withdrawal Monday, concluding its 20-year mission in Afghanistan.

Matthew Miller, national director of the VA's suicide prevention program, said he's received numerous questions about how the withdrawal is affecting the mental well-being of Afghanistan War veterans. The increase in calls and texts to the hotline helps to reveal

some of the effects, Miller said.

"I think it's really hard to speak for veterans as a whole because veterans are an extremely diverse group," he said. "[The hotline] gives a small sample, but a meaningful look at what's occurring within the veteran population."

The VA compared the number of calls, chats and texts to the same time period last year, rather than earlier in 2021, because usage increases or decreases depending on the time of year. August, September and October are the hotline's busiest months, Miller said.

The VA does not ask veterans for demographic information on the calls, so it's not clear how many texts or calls have been initiated by Afghanistan War veterans, Miller said. However, veterans ages 18 to 34 are more inclined to use chat or text, rather than calling the hotline.

But the withdrawal from Afghanistan has prompted some Vietnam War veterans to use the hotline, too.

"I don't want this to come across as being a post-9/11 specific issue," Miller said. "We have veterans from the Vietnam era who have been contacting us who are incorporating what they're seeing on the news into their process of working

on what they experienced as a result of their service."

The Veterans Crisis Line is operated by responders at three call centers in Canandaigua, N.Y.; Topeka, Kan.; and Atlanta. To handle the influx of calls in recent weeks, the hotline has been using its backup centers, Kearney said.

On Tuesday, 34 senators wrote to VA Secretary Denis McDonough, asking him to increase outreach to post-9/11 veterans about the mental health resources available to them. They referenced VA data that show suicide rates are lower among veterans who use VA care.

"We ask that the VA develop a comprehensive outreach plan to connect Afghanistan and Global War on Terrorism veterans to VA benefits and services," the senators wrote. "This plan must proactively contact veterans in the coming months through means including, but not be limited to, digital correspondence, social media, phone calls, and text messages."

Jeremy Butler, CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, said he supported the idea of a "sustained, comprehensive plan to reach veterans."

A group of House Republicans

called on Rep. Mark Takano, D-Calif., the chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, to hold a hearing regarding veterans' mental health following America's withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Rep. Mike Bost, of Illinois, the ranking Republican on the committee, led the letter written to Takano, in which he described the withdrawal as a failure of President Joe Biden's administration.

"We must convey to our nation's veterans that their service and sacrifice have not been in vain, and that despite political failures in Washington, they are heroes who have indeed accomplished their mission in Afghanistan and left the world a better, safer place," the Republicans wrote.

Takano issued a statement Tuesday defending Biden's decisions about Afghanistan and encouraged people to "reach out to the veterans in your lives."

Veterans who want to contact the Veterans Crisis Line can dial 1-800-273-8255, and then press 1, or text the crisis line at 838255. An option to chat online is available at veteranscrisisline.net.

NATION

In Ida's aftermath, no quick relief in sight for Louisiana

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Louisiana residents still reeling from flooding and damage caused by Hurricane Ida scrambled Wednesday for food, gas, water and relief from the sweltering heat as thousands of line workers toiled to restore electricity and officials vowed to set up more sites where people could get free meals and cool off.

There was a glimmer of hope when power company Entergy announced its crews had turned power on for parts of eastern New Orleans, but did not specify how many homes and businesses had lights. Still, power and water outages affected hundreds of thousands of people, many of them with no way to get immediate relief.

"I don't have a car. I don't have no choice but to stay," said Charles Harris, 58, as he looked for a place to eat Tuesday in a New Orleans neighborhood where Ida snapped utility poles and brought down power lines.

Harris had no access to a generator and said the heat was starting to wear him down. New Orleans and the rest of the region were under a heat advisory, with forecasters saying the high temperatures and humidity could make it feel like 106 degrees Fahrenheit on Wednesday.

New Orleans officials announced seven places around the city where people could get a meal and sit in air conditioning. The city was also using 70 transit buses as cooling sites and was to have drive-thru food, water and ice distribution locations set up Wednesday, Mayor LaToya Cantrell said. Distribution locations were also being set up in other parts of the state, the governor said.

Ida was the fifth-most powerful storm to strike the United States when it hit Louisiana on Sunday with maximum winds of 150 mph. The hurricane likely caused \$50 billion or more in total damage, Karen Clark of the risk modeling company Karen Clark and Company told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

The mayor estimated that about half of New Orleans' population evacuated before Ida struck. Those remaining worked to slowly restore a sense of order. In parts of the city, flags hung from dangling power lines to help drivers avoid them. In one neighborhood, someone decorated the downed

lines with strands of tinsel in an echo of Mardi Gras.

City crews removing debris from roads and cutting up fallen trees had some streets almost completely cleared, while others remained cluttered with obstacles.

A few corner stores were open. Many were taking cash only, though some had working ATMs. In many areas, National Guard soldiers or law enforcement stood posted at pharmacies and gas stations, where drivers waited in long lines for fuel.

A nighttime curfew in New Orleans took effect Tuesday in an effort to prevent crime. Police Chief Shaun Ferguson said there had been some arrests for stealing.

Though some lights were back on Wednesday, a statement from power company Entergy said reconnecting all of New Orleans "will still take time given the significant damage" to the city's power grid.

The company said it was looking to first restore power to "critical infrastructure" such as hospitals, nursing homes and first responders.

The number of deaths from the hurricane climbed to at least five in Louisiana and Mississippi when Jefferson Parish authorities confirmed a woman was found dead in her home in the community of Lafitte. Jefferson Parish sheriff's Capt. Jason Rivarde said the woman was found during rescue operations Monday.

More than 1 million homes and businesses in Louisiana and Mississippi were left without power when Ida slammed the electric grid, toppling a major transmission tower and knocking out thousands of miles of lines and hundreds of substations.

An estimated 25,000-plus utility workers labored to restore electricity, but officials said it could take weeks.

Kisha Brown, a medical receptionist who rode out the storm with her two daughters at her apartment, was among hundreds of people who turned to one of the sites in New Orleans distributing free meals.

She lost power and said her food supply was dwindling.

Her other main concern was the heat.

"My last resort would probably be to go to the hospital," she said. "They'll let me in if I show my ID."



ELIAS FUNEZ, THE UNION/AP

A Los Angeles County firefighter uses a hose to douse the flames of the Caldor Fire as they approach Highway 89 in the Christmas Valley on Tuesday afternoon in California.

Strong winds push California wildfire closer to Lake Tahoe

Associated Press

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE — Flames raced across treetops and through drought-stricken vegetation as firefighters scrambled Wednesday to keep a growing California wildfire from reaching a resort city at the southern tip of Lake Tahoe after evacuation orders were expanded to neighboring Nevada.

Thick smoke from the Caldor Fire enveloped the city of South Lake Tahoe, which was all but deserted during a summer week usually bustling with tourists.

The National Weather Service warned that critical weather conditions through Wednesday could include extremely low humidity, dry fuel and gusts up to 30 mph.

"With those winds, as it ran through the forest it created what's called an active crown fire run, where the fire actually goes from treetop to treetop," said Stephen Vollmer, a fire behavior analyst for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

He said embers were being cast up to a mile out in front of the fire, creating new ignition points, including in some parts of the dense forest that haven't burned since 1940 or before.

The blaze was 3 miles outside of South Lake Tahoe by Tuesday afternoon, Cal Fire Battalion Chief Henry Herrera told KGO-TV.

A day earlier, roughly 22,000 residents jammed the city's main artery for hours after they were ordered to leave as the fire advanced.

South Lake Tahoe city officials said only a handful of residents defied Monday's evacuation order. But nearly everyone worried Tuesday about what the fire would do next.

Tom O'Connell and his wife, Linda, awaited the fate of their home while anchored on their sailboat in Ventura Harbor. The two-bedroom they've owned for 40 years survived the Angora Fire that destroyed about 250 houses in 2007. They didn't know if they'd be lucky again.

"You worry about the things you can have some control over," O'Connell said. "We have no control over this."

Pushed by strong winds, the Caldor Fire crossed two major highways and swept down slopes into the Tahoe Basin, where firefighters working in steep terrain were protecting remote cabins.

Cal Fire Division Chief Erich Schwab said some homes burned, but it was too early to know how many.

"The fire burned through there extremely fast, extremely hot. And we did the best that we could," he said Tuesday night.

Thick smoke prevented air firefighting operations periodically last week. But since then, nearly two dozen helicopters and three air tankers dumped thousands of gallons of water and retardant on the fire, fire spokesman Dominic Polito said.

As flames moved toward the Heavenly ski resort on the California-Nevada border, officials

turned on the mountain's snow-making machines. Cal Fire Battalion Chief Jed Gaines told KPIX-TV that spraying the slopes with water was "increasing the humidity level, it's getting everything wet" so that if the fire starts climbing "it's able to slow it down."

The Lake Tahoe area is usually a year-round recreational paradise offering beaches, water sports, hiking, ski resorts and golfing. South Lake Tahoe bustles with outdoor activities while just across the state border in State-line, Nev., tourists can gamble at major casinos.

But on Tuesday, only a few dozen tourists remained on the casino floor of the Montbleu Resort, Casino and Spa. The state board that controls gaming said that casino regulators were monitoring operations at the four largest gambling properties in the city.

Hotels are housing evacuees, fire crews and other emergency personnel. In all, Harrah's, Harveys Lake Tahoe Casino, the Hard Rock and Montbleu Resort have more than 2,200 hotel rooms.

Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak urged residents to be prepared, saying there was no timeline for when evacuations might be ordered. At a news conference in Carson City, he noted that ash was falling on him even though the fire was about 20 miles away.

"I'm standing here and I'm getting all ash particulates on my jacket, even," the governor said. "This is serious, folks."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Cougar kept as illegal pet removed from home

NY NEW YORK — An 80-pound cougar was removed from a New York City apartment where she was being kept illegally as a pet, animal welfare officials said.

The owner of the 11-month-old female cougar surrendered the animal, Kelly Donithan, director of animal disaster response for the Humane Society of the United States, said in a news release.

The cougar, nicknamed Sasha, spent the weekend at the Bronx Zoo receiving veterinary care and is now headed to the Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas, officials said.

The Humane Society coordinated with zoo officials, the state Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York Police Department on the big cat's removal.

Man rescued after days trapped at sand dune

OR REEDSPORT — Authorities said a 54-year-old man was rescued from the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area after being stranded for five days.

KOIN reported the Coos County Sheriff's Office said hikers found the stranded and injured man on the John Dellenback trail. He had fallen off a dune and had back and neck injuries. He was also dehydrated.

The U.S. Coast Guard had to be called in to assist in his rescue because the area was not accessible by ATV or UTVs.

The man was airlifted and taken to a hospital.

Man gets jail for stealing from caddies' fund

MI BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP — A man was sentenced to more than four years in prison for stealing more than \$600,000 from a college scholarship fund for caddies at one of Michigan's most exclusive golf clubs.

Craig Maass, 62, said he took money from the Oakland Hills Country Club fund while he was abusing alcohol and feeling distressed over a failed marriage. More than 100 checks totaling \$633,000 were written over a 13-month period.

Maass supervised the fund and, like his parents, was a club member, The Detroit News reported.

Maass pleaded no contest to embezzlement.

Woman pleads guilty in decapitation case

NH NORTH HAVERHILL — A New Hampshire woman who contends she was forced to behead her lover's corpse after her husband killed the man pleaded guilty to three counts of falsifying evidence in a



ANDREE KEHN, (LEWISTON, MAINE) SUN JOURNAL/AP

Just a little off the top

Brody White, of Oxford, gets a free haircut from Riley Brennan at Crow's Nest Barbershop in Auburn, Maine. Anyone 18 and under who was heading back to school could get a free haircut. The barbershop ran the promotion with Hot Radio Maine and Dirigo Credit Union.

plea agreement with prosecutors.

The woman entered a plea in Grafton County Superior Court. She was charged with allegedly decapitating Jonathan Amerault, 25, of Keene. She also is accused of wrapping his body in a tarp and dragging it to a remote area and cleaning Amerault's car after he was killed.

The woman's husband is accused of luring Amerault to a park where the man was beaten, kidnapped and then shot three times last September. The husband is also accused of hiding the body at a campsite in northern New Hampshire.

The husband faces charges including capital murder, first-degree murder, kidnapping and second-degree assault.

Police probe apparent motor oil dumping in lake

VT MILTON — Vermont State Police are investigating what appeared to be the dumping of a large amount of motor oil in Arrowhead Mountain Lake in Milton, the agency said.

Fire departments from Georgia and Milton responded Sunday morning and took steps to contain the spill, which was later being cleaned up by contractors hired by the state, police said.

An environmental enforcement officer with the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources also was investigating, officials said.

THE CENSUS

101 The amount, in millions of dollars, that Montana State University received as a donation to its College of Nursing. It is believed to be the largest donation given to a college of nursing in the U.S., school officials said. The donation comes from Mark and Robyn Jones, founders of Goosehead Insurance, based in Westlake, Texas. The money will fund new facilities and state-of-the-art simulation labs, and create five faculty professorships, an endowed scholarship fund and a nurse midwifery program.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to contact the Natural Resources Agency or Vermont State Police.

Man charged with attempting to steal plane

HI HILO — A 24-year-old man was arrested and taken to a Hawaii jail on Monday after he allegedly tried to steal a small airplane from an airport, authorities said.

The Hawaii Police Department said the man crashed a vehicle through the fence at Hilo International Airport on the Big Island on Friday. He then parked next to a fixed-winged single engine aircraft, got out and attempted to manually spin the aircraft's propeller, authorities said.

Police said he then approached a Beechcraft King Air C90A aircraft parked on the ramp, entered the cockpit and started both engines before leaving the plane.

Officers arrested him shortly after. A witness flagged down a patrol officer to report the situation.

Hawaii News Now reported the plane is an air ambulance. Police said the aircraft is worth \$1.5 million.

The man was arrested on attempted theft in the first degree, criminal property damage in the first degree, unauthorized control of a propelled vehicle and criminal trespassing charges.

Deputies: Woman tried to set patrol vehicle on fire

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — A woman was jailed after trying unsuccessfully to set a Florida deputy's patrol vehicle on fire, officials said.

The 25-year-old woman was arrested Sunday night at a Fort Lauderdale-area intersection, according to a Broward Sheriff's Office news release. She faces several charges, including aggravated assault on a law enforcement officer and attempted arson.

The deputy was sitting in her marked unit at the intersection when the woman walked up to the vehicle, started banging on her window and broke off the driver-

side mirror, officials said. The woman then walked to the rear of the vehicle, opened the gas tank cover and removed the gas cap. The woman placed paper items into the gas tank and used a lighter to set a lottery ticket on fire, authorities said.

The deputy believed the woman was intending to set the vehicle on fire. The deputy got out of the vehicle and ordered the woman onto the ground. The woman complied and other deputies arrived to help place her into custody. The patrol vehicle did not catch fire.

Armed man charged with disrupting tribal event

ME CARIBOU — A man armed with an assault rifle and a stun gun threatened people at a tribal event hosted by the Aroostook Band of Micmacs before fleeing into the woods over the weekend, police said.

The man was arrested after a standoff that began late Saturday, the Caribou Police Chief Michael Gahagan said in a statement.

The man was charged with criminal threatening with a dangerous weapon, possession of a firearm by a prohibited person, terrorizing, reckless conduct with a dangerous weapon, criminal threatening with a dangerous weapon and creating a police standoff, Gahagan said.

NATION

Texas 6-week abortion ban starts; high court mum

By MARK SHERMAN
Associated Press

A Texas law banning most abortions in the state took effect at midnight, but the Supreme Court has yet to act on an emergency appeal to put the law on hold.

If allowed to remain in force, the law would be the most dramatic restriction on abortion rights in the United States since the high court's landmark Roe v. Wade decision legalized abor-

tion across the country in 1973. The Texas law, signed by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott in May, would prohibit abortions once a fetal heartbeat can be detected, usually around six weeks and before most women even know they're pregnant.

Abortion providers who are asking the Supreme Court to step in said the law would rule out 85% of abortions in Texas and force many clinics to close. Planned Parenthood is among

the abortion providers that have stopped scheduling abortions beyond six weeks from conception.

At least 12 other states have enacted bans on abortion early in pregnancy, but all have been blocked from going into effect.

What makes the Texas law different is its unusual enforcement scheme. Rather than have officials responsible for enforcing the law, private citizens are authorized to sue abortion pro-

viders and anyone involved in facilitating abortions. Among other situations, that would include anyone who drives a woman to a clinic to get an abortion. Under the law, anyone who successfully sues another person would be entitled to at least \$10,000.

Abortion opponents who wrote the law also made it difficult to challenge the law in court, in part because it's hard to know whom to sue.

Texas has long had some of the

nation's toughest abortion restrictions, including a sweeping law passed in 2013 that the Supreme Court eventually struck down, but not before more than half of the state's 40-plus abortion clinics closed.

Lawmakers are also moving forward in an ongoing special session in Texas with proposed new restrictions on medication abortion, a method using pills that accounts for roughly 40% of abortions in the U.S.

Non-fan of R. Kelly describes still falling prey to him

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A woman who wasn't a fan of R. Kelly ended up getting exposed to a sexually transmitted disease after he enticed her to join him on the road, she testified on Tuesday at the R&B entertainer's sex-trafficking trial.

The witness, taking the stand without using her real name, said she was 19 when her older half-sister invited

her to a Kelly concert in San Antonio in 2017. Her sibling was a fan of his music, she said, but "I was not."

The sisters were invited to a backstage after-party — the beginning of a brief relationship that had elements also described by other victims alleging sexual abuse by Kelly when they were still in high school. Kelly paid for the woman's flights and hotel

rooms to his concerts in cities where he demanded sex from her in hotel rooms and other locations.

A prosecutor asked whether he told her he had herpes or wore condoms. "No, he did not," she responded. Earlier in the trial — now in its third week — the jury heard Kelly's personal physician describe treating him for herpes for several years and from another

woman who claimed he gave her herpes from unprotected sex.

Kelly, 54, has repeatedly denied accusations that he preyed on victims during a 30-year career highlighted by his 1996 smash hit song, "I Believe I Can Fly." His lawyers have portrayed his accusers as groupies who are lying about their relationships with him.



ELIZABETH WILLIAMS/AP

In this courtroom artist's sketch R. Kelly, left, listens during his trial in New York last week.

Texas Legislature sends sweeping GOP voting bill to governor

Associated Press

AUSTIN — The sweeping changes to Texas' election code now awaiting GOP Gov. Greg Abbott's signature would make it harder — sometimes even legally riskier — to cast a ballot in the state, which already has some of the nation's most restrictive voting laws.

Democrats gridlocked the state Capitol for 38 consecutive days after more than 50 fled to Washington, D.C., in July to deny Republicans a quorum,

which is required to conduct the state's business. Enough of them returned less than two weeks ago to end the impasse, and GOP leaders made quick work of pushing the bill through both chambers on Tuesday. Abbott immediately said he'll sign it.

Some of the most significant changes in the Texas legislation concerns partisan poll watchers, the volunteers deployed by both major parties to observe voting and counting. The final language of the omnibus bill gives parti-

san poll watchers new access, protections and power. The legislation makes it a Class A misdemeanor — comparable to burglary of a vehicle — for an election official to reject an appointed poll watcher. Under the measure, anyone who knowingly obstructs a poll watcher's view also commits a legal offense. Poll watchers may only be removed for violating election law if the violation is witnessed by the election clerk or judge and for violations of the penal code.

The legislation written by Republicans explicitly rolls back ways Democratic counties have made it easier for people to vote, especially during the coronavirus pandemic. It bans drop boxes for mail ballots — a practice that has been used for years in other states with no major problems — and prohibits the mailing of absentee voting applications and ballots to all eligible voters. The bill also makes it a felony for any election official who sends out unsolicited appli-

cations or ballots to vote-by-mail.

The Texas bill adds more steps and paperwork for voters, including requirements to include their driver's license number, election identification certificate or the final four digits of their Social Security number and an "ink-on-paper" signature that can verifiably be matched with any previously filed signature in corresponding Texas Department of Public Safety records.

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WORLD

Italy braces for train track protests against mandatory COVID-19 passes

Associated Press

ROME — Italy's government vowed to crack down on demonstrators threatening to block train tracks throughout the country Wednesday as a rule requiring COVID-19 tests or vaccines to use public transportation for long-distance domestic travel took effect.

In a bid to rein in the transmission of infections as Italians returned from summer vacations, the government announced weeks ago that passengers must show a so-called "Green Pass" to board domestic flights, trains and buses traveling between regions. The passes certify the holder received at least one vaccine dose more than 15 days prior, tested negative in the past 48 hours or recovered from COVID-19 in the previous six months.

The requirement also applies to sea travel, although some ferries are exempt, such as ones serving tiny islands with no other connections to the mainland and those used by commuters between Sicily and and the southern tip of the mainland in Calabria.



CLAUDIO FURLAN, L'ESPRESSO/AP

A passenger holds up his phone at a checkpoint at Stazione Centrale train station in Milan, Italy, on Wednesday.

Local buses, trams and subways also are exempt from the rule, which was announced by Premier Mario Draghi's government when daily caseloads started steadily rising as the delta variant of the virus became prevalent in Italy.

Opponents of the requirement called for sympathizers to gather at some 50 train stations, including in Rome and Milan, on Wednesday afternoon and vowed to occupy rail

tracks, if necessary, to stop trains.

On the eve of the transportation rule taking effect, Italian Interior Minister Lucia Lamorgese said there would be zero tolerance for law breakers at track protests or for any violence. Several recent protests, including in Rome and Milan, turned violent.

So far, some 70% of Italy's residents 12 years or older have been fully vaccinated.

Russian-negotiated cease-fire takes hold in southern Syria

Associated Press

BEIRUT — A Russian-negotiated cease-fire took effect Wednesday in a volatile southern city, according to the Syrian opposition and state media.

Violence in the area in recent weeks between Syrian government forces and opposition fighters had threatened to undo years of relative calm along the borders with Israel and Jordan.

As part of the deal, Russian military police are deploying in Daraa al-Balad, the rebel-held old quarter of Daraa in southern Syria. The deal also involves the disarming or expulsion of a dozen rebels from the area who were considered by the Syrian government to be a threat to the cease-fire agreement, the Britain-based war monitor Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported.

Adnan Masalmeh, an opposition figure involved in the talks, said the deal also ensures an end to the siege imposed on Daraa city since violence broke out. Syrian state-run Al-Ikhbariyah TV said a center has been set up for opposition gunmen to hand in their weapons or register to leave the area.

Fighting in Daraa al-Balad has raged for weeks. The opposition blamed the government for the escalation, saying that troops were pressing an offensive to force insurgents to surrender.

Daraa province became known as the cradle of the uprising against Syrian President Bashar Assad that erupted in 2011. It was recaptured by Syrian government troops in 2018. Assad has since regained control of most of the country with the help of Russia and Iran.

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Departures raise the same haunting question

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

Washington Post Writers Group

To say the least, it is an eerily familiar feeling to witness our final exit from Afghanistan. At exactly one minute before midnight on Aug. 30, Army Maj. Gen. Christopher T. Donahue was the last man to board the last C-17 cargo plane that would lift him and the last group of troops up and away from our faraway home of the past 20 years.

Few can imagine what those last troops must have felt as they left behind Americans, at-risk Afghans and, especially, the memories of 13 fellow Marines, soldiers and Navy personnel who were killed by a terrorist bomb at the Kabul airport in the final days. The humiliation of defeat, the sense of loss, and, ultimately, the blood and treasure left behind, remind us of a not-distant past.

Baby boomers and older Americans remember too well our departure from Vietnam 46 years ago. They remember the war protests, the agonies both emotional and physical that continue to torment so many veterans of that war. My brother, a Marine who survived his 18th year in Vietnam, has attended the funerals of many of his comrades, several of whom died from Agent Orange-related cancers.

My semper-fi Marine correspondents, who've been with me for several decades, have relived the anguished days of their youth through images and news reports

from Kabul. Therapy is back in session. My own brain is on a continuous loop, replaying the famous chorus sung by Country Joe and the Fish at Woodstock in 1969:

And it's 1,2,3

Whatever are we fighting for?

Don't ask me, I don't give a damn

Next stop is Vietnam

And it's 5,6,7

Open up the pearly gates

Ah, ain't no time to wonder why

Whoopee

We're all going to die.

As I've written before, the two wars are not the same. We weren't attacked by terrorists hiding in Vietnam. We weren't in pursuit of the most-hated and most-dangerous man of our time. But in both cases, we stayed too long, and we left with our tails tucked. If you measure success or defeat in body counts, Vietnam was the much bigger error. Vietnam ground up some 58,000 American boys and men. Yes, boys. Before 1971, when Congress lowered the voting age from 21 to 18, an 18-year-old was rightly considered a kid. The reasoning behind the change was partly that if the government could draft 18-year-olds for war, then the boys ought to be able to vote.

Afghanistan, though longer, was less bloody, claiming 2,352 American lives. The bomb blast, for which ISIS-K boasted credit, was the bloodiest day for the U.S. military in a decade. I see the faces of

those young men and two women — all younger than my youngest — and tears follow. Killed by a suicide imbecile wearing a vest loaded with 25 pounds of high explosives and shrapnel, they were trying to help Afghans escape the country that we built and then donated to the Taliban.

Five of the 13 were just 20 years old. In interviews with CBS News, family and friends used similar language to describe them: Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Kareem Nikoui was "just a good kid," said his high school principal Robert Ibbetson. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Dylan R. Merola, who had been in Afghanistan for just over a week and was due home in two weeks, was, "One of the best kids ever," said his mother Cheryl Merola. "Kind, loving ... he would give anything for anybody."

That he did. They all did.

As we sort through our feelings and reactions to the Taliban takeover, Country Joe's question remains. What were we fighting for? After 20 years, who really knows? It was never our mission or our job to create a country or establish a democracy. We couldn't unravel all the factions, or cultural differences, but eradicating the terrorists was a big part of it. On that score, we clearly failed.

What follows next will surely haunt us, but here's hoping our troops will be daily reminded by strangers that, no matter the mistakes of our commanders in chief, they will always be American heroes to us.

US complacency only emboldens our enemies

BY GEORGE F. WILL

Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON

Eighty years ago, there was a notable U.S. intelligence failure: A Japanese fleet crossed the Pacific undetected until 6:10 a.m. Hawaii time, Dec. 7, 1941, when the minesweeper USS Condor sighted a submarine's periscope, 105 minutes before the attack began. Since then, there have been other intelligence failures: About the Bay of Pigs and the fragility of the Castro regime, about the 1968 Tet Offensive in Vietnam, about 9/11, about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

In 1992, Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-N.Y., remembered a warning by CIA Director Allen Dulles (who would become a Washington casualty of the Bay of Pigs) in 1959 that the Soviet Union's economy was humming so efficiently that by 1970 the gap between the Soviet and U.S. economies would be dangerously narrow. But, then, the 1957 Gaither Commission projected that the Soviet gross domestic product would surpass the U.S. GDP in 1993. (The sclerotic Soviet Union did not live that long.) Moynihan noted that in 1987 the CIA reported that East Germany's per capita GDP was higher than West Germany's, an assessment that "any taxi driver in Berlin" could have refuted.

In the aftermath of the U.S. government's misunderstanding of the Afghan regime's durability and the Taliban's capability, clearly in foreign policy as well as domestic policy the government needs a dose of epistemic humility. Epistemology is the field of philosophy concerned with the nature and limits of knowledge.

Domestically, the Biden administration

speaks breezily about "transforming" the financial and energy components of the nation's almost \$23 trillion economy, oblivious about possible unintended consequences. In foreign policy, a chastened administration needs to tailor its objectives to fit its ability to know what it does not know.

In 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson called the United States "the locomotive at the head of mankind." Europe was recuperating, Asia's economic development had barely begun and U.S. prestige had soared because of its prodigies of war production. Forty years later, as the Berlin Wall was being chipped into souvenirs and the Soviet Union was a year from extinction, former U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick published an article whose title expressed her expectation and the nation's yearning in 1990: During the Cold War, foreign policy had acquired "an unnatural importance," but now the United States could again be "A Normal Country in a Normal Time."

The U.S. holiday from history lasted 11 years. It ended with the thunderclap of 9/11, which shattered long-standing assumptions about technology and civilization advancing in tandem.

"The rapid increase of the means of communications throughout the globe," said a U.S. secretary of state, "have brought into almost daily intercourse communities which hitherto have been aliens and strangers to each other, so that now no great social and moral wrong can be inflicted on any people without being felt throughout the civilized globe." So spoke Hamilton Fish in 1873, 15 years after the first — low-quality and short-lived (it lasted three weeks) — trans-Atlantic telegraph cable was laid.

Since then, communications have been enriched by the telephone, radio, cinema, television, satellites and the internet. Is it, however, clear that this enrichment, which has enabled graphic journalism, has made wrongs more intensely "felt" from afar? Perhaps it has had a desensitizing effect.

The April 26, 1937, bombing of Guernica by German planes supporting the fascist side in Spain's civil war shocked the world and provoked Picasso to produce perhaps the 20th century's emblematic painting. The bombing killed an estimated 300. Just six years later — two years before Hiroshima and Nagasaki — Allied bombing produced the Hamburg firestorm that killed perhaps 20,000. The world was only momentarily attentive in 1995 when Bosnian Serbs massacred more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys at Srebrenica.

Today, with the United States facing a near-peer adversary in muscle-flexing China, and with malign nonstate actors worldwide euphoric about the U.S. stumble out of Afghanistan, there will be U.S. domestic pressures for focusing on (in Barack Obama's phrase) "nation-building here at home." However, Robert Kagan, writing in Foreign Affairs, reminds us:

"In the 1950s, during the Eisenhower administration — often seen as a time of admirable restraint in U.S. foreign policy — the United States had almost one million troops deployed overseas, out of a total American population of 170 million. Today, in an era when the United States is said to be dangerously overextended, there are roughly 200,000 U.S. troops deployed overseas, out of a population of 330 million."

Americans are impatient, eager to stop thinking about their enemies, who are implacable. This is a dangerous asymmetry.

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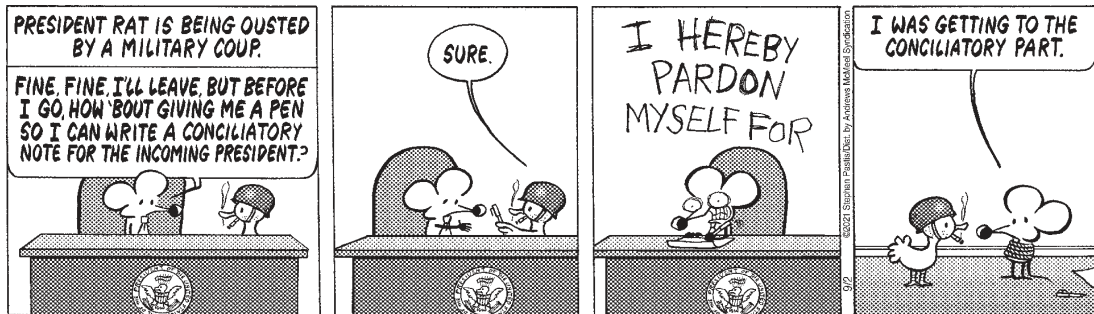
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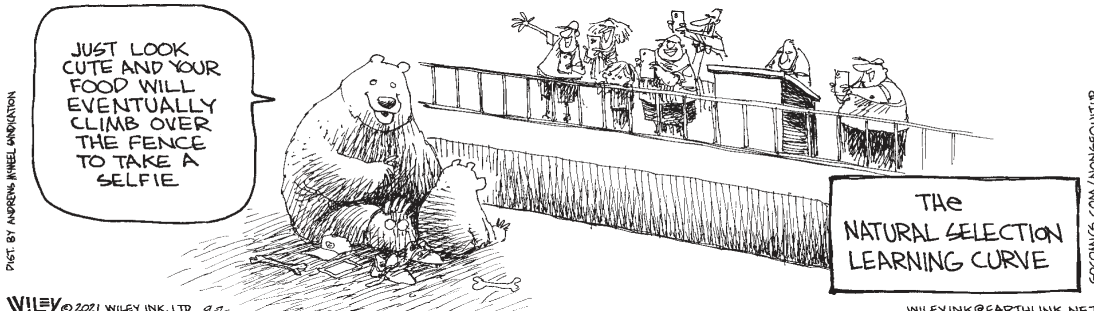
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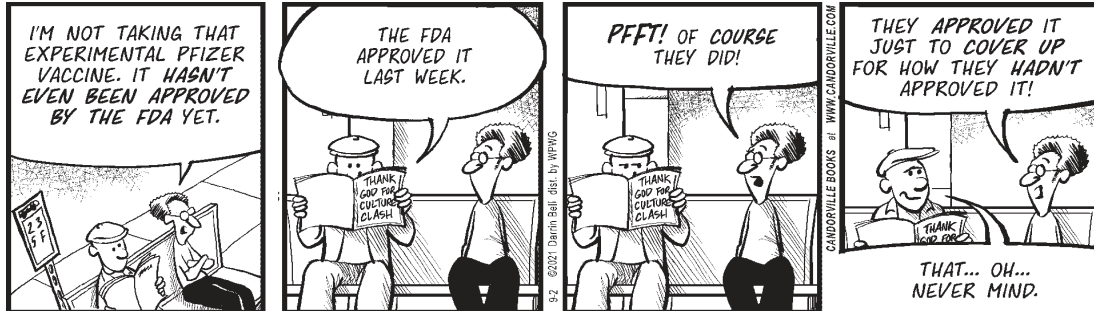
Pearls Before Swine



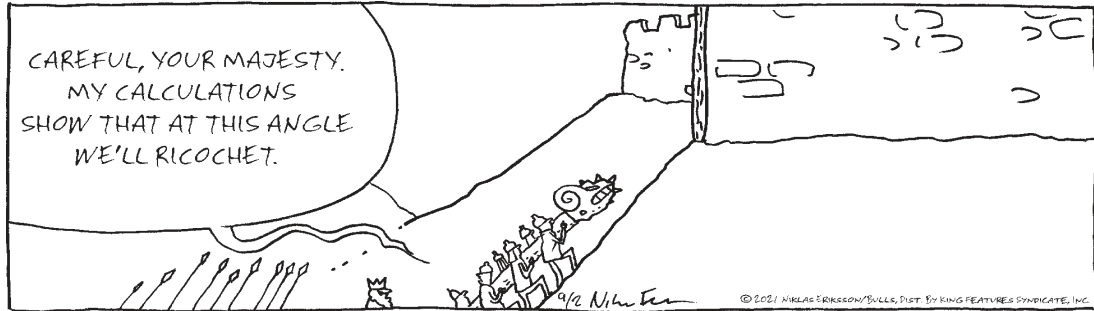
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Candorville



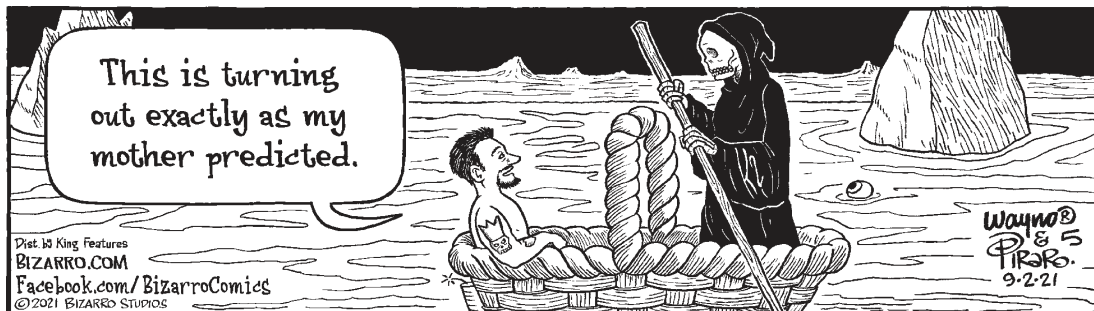
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11
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18								19	20			
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41	42						43			44	45	46
47					48	49	50					
51					52					53		
54					55					56		

ACROSS

- 1 Par
- 5 Donate
- 9 Journal
- 12 Jai —
- 13 Cannes milk
- 14 One-time link
- 15 Boston Common rest spot
- 17 King, in Cannes
- 18 Sailor's assent
- 19 Like wine barrels
- 21 — novo (anew)
- 22 Creche figure
- 24 Wrestling style
- 27 Fa follower
- 28 Transcript stats
- 31 Actress Longoria
- 32 Sort
- 33 Hollywood's Thurman
- 34 Small pie
- 36 USN officers
- 37 Senior moment?
- 38 Sneakers, slangily
- 40 AMA member
- 41 "Top Chef" host Lakshmi
- 43 Pooh's mopey pal
- 47 First numero
- 48 Jessica Alba TV series
- 51 Trim the grass
- 52 Engagement gift
- 53 Patricia of "Hud"
- 54 Raggedy doll

- 55 Historic times
- 56 Congers

DOWN

- 1 Wine valley fabric
- 2 Skin care brand
- 3 Exceptional barkeep
- 4 Japanese emperor
- 5 Jubilation
- 6 Actor McKellen
- 7 London's Old —
- 8 Community spirit
- 9 Delphinium
- 10 Oklahoma tribe
- 11 Profit
- 16 "See ya!" (Abbr.)
- 20 Summer mo.
- 22 Sudden shocks
- 23 Lodge members
- 24 "Game, —, match!"
- 25 Sch. founded by Jefferson
- 26 Price reduction
- 27 Lingerie
- 29 I love (Lat.)
- 30 "Cheers" barkeep
- 35 Singer McGraw
- 37 Hawthorne's Hester
- 39 Military group
- 40 Narc's agcy.
- 41 Cougar
- 42 Shortly
- 43 Heart charts
- 44 Curved molding
- 45 Authentic
- 46 Right angles
- 49 Melody
- 50 Genetic letters

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

9-2

CRYPTOQUIP

G N F G F D K R T U F Y D G C E N D U G F

K Y T T N E E R C Q X I G U U R C Y Q G U

Q R T T D G F E L Y Q . C G V G F R

V Y R T U F G C L D R I N X !

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT COULD YOU CALL THE STUDY OF FOLKS LIKE SONGWRITER ARLEN AND PLAYWRIGHT PINTER? HAROLD RY.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: N equals U

FACES

Richards out as producer of 'Jeopardy!'

BY LYNN ELBER
Associated Press

Mike Richards is out as executive producer of "Jeopardy!", days after he exited as the quiz show's newly appointed host because of past misogynistic and disparaging comments.

Richards is also no longer executive producer of "Wheel of Fortune," according to a memo to staff that was confirmed by Sony Pictures Television, which produces both of the shows.

"We had hoped that when Mike stepped down from the host position at Jeopardy!, it would have minimized the disruption and internal difficulties we have all experienced these last few weeks. That clearly has not happened," Suzanne Prete, an executive with the game shows, said in the memo.

The lag between Richards' Aug. 20 decision to step down as host and Sony's announcement Tuesday was filled with speculation about why the studio was keeping him on. "Jeopardy!" fans called him unsuitable for the venerated show, and there were reports of dissatisfaction by staffers.

"Richards has been perceived as damaged goods since the moment the scandal broke," said crisis public relations expert Eden Gillott, referring to Richards' podcast remarks. "It's surprising that Sony kept Ri-



Richards

chards on as executive producer for as long as it did."

In her memo, Prete said she will work with Richards' interim replacement, Michael Davies, until further notice. Davies produces ABC's "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire."

James Holzhauer, a "Jeopardy!" champion who mocked Richards when he surrendered the host job, weighed in Tuesday. "Do I think Mike Richards' podcast comments were appropriate for polite society? No. But did he deserve the benefit of the doubt for the job he did running Jeopardy? Also no," Holzhauer tweeted.

The short-lived Richards era caught the attention of comedian and TV host W. Kamau Bell (CNN's "United Shades of America"). "I really want the "Tiger King"-style documentary on this whole thing," Bell posted on Twitter.

Richards had signed an overall development deal with Sony in 2019, and was announced as executive producer of "Jeopardy!" and "Wheel of Fortune" in May 2020.

He quickly became controversial when he went from behind the scenes to Sony's pick for host of "Jeopardy!" — even before

his 2013-14 podcast comments demeaning women and making stereotypical remarks about Asian, Jews and others surfaced.

Anointing Richards as successor to the admired Alex Trebek was a questionable choice to some, especially since the studio had conducted a splashy search with guest hosts that included actors, sports figures, journalists — and Richards.

Questions were raised about whether Richards had put his finger on the scale in favor of himself, and whether he had the gravitas seen in other candidates. The decision to bypass a person of color or a woman for the flagship show also was criticized, although guest host Mayim Bialik was named host for prime-time "Jeopardy!" specials.

The episodes that Richards taped during his short tenure as host are scheduled to air when the show returns for its 38th season starting Sept. 13; a do-over with a substitute host would be a slap at the contestants and further undermine the show.

Richards largely had game and reality shows on his résumé, but "Jeopardy!" is widely regarded as something more: A contest that adheres to civility and is won on the basis of knowledge, and which had long been stewarded by the dignified Trebek. He died in November 2020 at age 80, shortly after taping his final shows.

Richards' comments on his "The Rando Show" podcast were reported by The Ringer website, and the ensuing furor prompted him to announce that staying on as host would be "too much of a distraction for our fans" and wrong for the show.

On the podcast, Richards used derogatory, crude language about women and their bodies and disparaged the homeless, among others.

There also was renewed attention to Richards and his 2009-18 tenure as a producer on "The Price Is Right." Several lawsuits had been filed by former models against the show alleging discriminatory behavior, including one that named Richards. He reportedly was dropped from it before a settlement was reached.

When Richards exited as host, Sony said the podcasts came as a surprise, vowing to hold him to a standard of "professionalism and respect" as producer.

That Sony failed to properly scrutinize Richards from the start was unsupportable, said Gillott, president of Gillott Communications.

The studio "created turmoil within the organization because it didn't ask the right questions in its search for a host, hesitated in responding to the controversy, and didn't sever all ties quickly," she said.

Golden Globes group elects new board of directors

From wire reports

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association, the voting body behind the Golden Globes, elected a new board of directors Tuesday.

The HFPA said its 85-member organization elected a newly expanded board with 12 internal members, five of whom have never served on the board before. Two-thirds of the new directors are women.

The new board will select three outside directors who aren't HFPA members under a new set of reform bylaws recently approved by the group.

The move is the HFPA's first leadership change since the embattled group pledged "transformational change" this year.

It follows the association's vote in August approving a slate of reforms and measures aimed at addressing the controversies that have long dogged the association, as well as to overhaul the organization, expand membership with a focus on diversity and restore its credibility with the entertainment industry.

After a Los Angeles Times investigation in February brought to light allegations of financial and ethical lapses and pointed out that none of the HFPA's then 87 members was Black, the group vowed to make sweeping changes. In March, a contingent of powerful entertainment publicists implemented a boycott, withholding clients from participating in HFPA

activities. In May, NBC pulled the plug on the 2022 Golden Globes broadcast after Netflix cut ties with the organization "until more meaningful changes are made." Amazon, WarnerMedia and Neon, the indie studio behind "Parasite," followed the streamer.

Lil Nas X honored by anti-suicide group

Lil Nas X has been awarded the inaugural Suicide Prevention Advocate of the Year Award from the advocacy group The Trevor Project.

The Trevor Project is a nonprofit dedicated to suicide prevention and crisis intervention for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning young people.

The group cited Lil Nas X's "openness about struggling with his sexuality and suicidal ideation, his continued advocacy around mental health issues, and his unapologetic celebration of his queer identity."

Bonnaroo canceled after heavy rain from Ida

Heavy rains from Hurricane Ida have forced Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival in Tennessee to cancel as organizers say the waterlogged festival grounds are unsafe for driving or camping. The annual festival was scheduled to start Thursday on the site of a former farm in Manchester, about an hour southeast of Nashville.



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

Alicia Keys performs at the Billboard Music Awards in Los Angeles on May 20. HarperCollins Publishers will release "Girl On Fire," a young adult graphic novel inspired by Keys' song, in March.

Artists who were scheduled to headline include Tyler, the Creator; deadmau5; Lizzo; My Morning Jacket; Foo Fighters; and Megan Thee Stallion.

The festival's attendance in 2019 was around 80,000, but last year's event was postponed to this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keys adapts 'Girl On Fire' into young adult novel

For Alicia Keys, "Girl On Fire" isn't just a million-selling single, but the title and inspiration for a young adult graphic novel scheduled for next year.

HarperCollins Publishers announced Tuesday that "Girl On Fire," the story of 14-year-old Lolo Wright and her telekinetic powers, will come out March 1. The book is cowritten by Andrew Weiner and illustrated by Britney Williams.

"When I wrote 'Girl On Fire,' I knew I was writing it for that girl in the way back row who needed someone to tell her there's nothing you can't do, that nothing is impossible," Keys said in a statement. "When Andrew and I came up with the idea of translating the song into a young adult graphic novel, I knew that I wanted it to be about a girl coming to realize the

strength she's always had. There's a little Lolo in all of us — we all have the power inside to do what we never even thought we could — and I'm so proud and crazy excited to be able to share her story with you. You're going to fall in love with Lolo."

A 15-time Grammy winner, Keys has also written the books "Tears for Water: Poetry & Lyrics" and the memoir "More Myself: A Journey."

Regulator clears Morgan over Meghan comments

Britain's media regulator on Wednesday cleared TV personality and journalist Piers Morgan of any violations for making comments about Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, that drew more than 50,000 viewer complaints, the largest number ever received by the watchdog agency.

The Office of Communications, known as Ofcom, said Morgan did not breach the broadcasting code when he said on "Good Morning Britain" that he did not believe what Meghan said during an interview with Oprah Winfrey in which the duchess said she had suicidal thoughts while struggling to fit in with the monarchy.

"This is a resounding victory for free speech and a resounding defeat for Princess Pinocchio. Do I get my job back?" Morgan, 56, tweeted in response to the Ofcom decision.

MLB

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Tampa Bay	84	48	.636	—
New York	76	56	.576	8
Boston	75	59	.560	10
Toronto	69	62	.527	14½
Baltimore	41	90	.313	42½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	77	56	.579	—
Cleveland	65	64	.504	10
Detroit	62	71	.466	15
Kansas City	59	72	.450	17
Minnesota	58	74	.439	18½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	78	54	.591	—
Oakland	73	59	.553	5
Seattle	71	62	.534	7½
Los Angeles	66	67	.496	12½
Texas	47	85	.356	31
National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	70	61	.534	—
Philadelphia	68	64	.515	2½
New York	65	67	.492	5½
Washington	55	76	.420	15
Miami	55	78	.414	16
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	81	52	.609	—
Cincinnati	71	62	.534	10
St. Louis	67	63	.515	12½
Chicago	58	75	.436	23
Pittsburgh	48	84	.364	32½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
San Francisco	84	48	.636	—
Los Angeles	84	49	.632	½
San Diego	71	62	.534	13½
Colorado	60	72	.455	24
Arizona	44	90	.328	41

Tuesday's games

Baltimore 4, Toronto 2
 Oakland 9, Detroit 3
 Tampa Bay 8, Boston 5
 Cleveland 7, Kansas City 2
 Chicago White Sox 4, Pittsburgh 2
 Texas 4, Colorado 3
 Chicago Cubs 3, Minnesota 1
 L.A. Angels 6, N.Y. Yankees 4
 Seattle 4, Houston 0
 N.Y. Mets 6, Miami 5, 1st game
 N.Y. Mets 3, Miami 1, 7 innings, 2nd game
 Philadelphia 12, Washington 6
 San Diego 3, Arizona 0
 Milwaukee 6, San Francisco 2
 L.A. Dodgers 3, Atlanta 2
 St. Louis at Cincinnati, ppd.

Wednesday's games

Colorado at Texas
 Houston at Seattle
 Baltimore at Toronto
 N.Y. Yankees at L.A. Angels
 Boston at Tampa Bay
 Oakland at Detroit
 Chicago Cubs at Minnesota
 Cleveland at Kansas City
 Pittsburgh at Chicago White Sox
 St. Louis at Cincinnati, 2
 San Diego at Arizona
 Philadelphia at Washington
 Milwaukee at San Francisco
 Atlanta at L.A. Dodgers
 Miami at N.Y. Mets, ppd.

Thursday's games

Oakland (Manaea 8-9) at Detroit (Manning 3-5)
 Boston (Rodriguez 10-7) at Tampa Bay (McClanahan 9-4)
 Cleveland (McKenzie 3-5) at Kansas City (Bubic 4-6)
 Milwaukee (Lauer 4-5) at San Francisco (Webb 8-3)
 Miami (Thompson 2-6) at N.Y. Mets (Carrasco 0-2)
 Pittsburgh (TBD) at Chicago Cubs (Thompson 3-3)
 Atlanta (Ynoa 4-4) at Colorado (Gray 7-10)

Friday's games

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

Angels hand Yanks 4th straight loss

Walsh hits 3-run homer, Ohtani steals home in 6-4 win for Los Angeles

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Manager Aaron Boone had no real problem with the way his New York Yankees executed on the double steal by the Los Angeles Angels that ended with Shohei Ohtani sliding safely into home.

Boone and the Yankees still seem confident in just about everything they're doing despite a losing streak that's threatening to end their AL East hopes before September even gets rolling.

Ohtani stole home, Jared Walsh hit a three-run homer and the Angels hung on late to send New York to its fourth straight loss, 6-4 Tuesday night.

Anthony Rizzo and Gary Sánchez homered for the Yankees, whose skid following their 13-game winning streak continued despite 10 hits at Angel Stadium. They couldn't catch up after Los Angeles went ahead 6-2 by executing its second double steal of the night involving Ohtani, who slid home after Phil Gosselin stole second.

"I was fine with (Sánchez) throwing," Boone said. "If we play



ALEX GALLARDO/AP

Los Angeles Angels' Jared Walsh follows through on a three-run home run next to New York Yankees catcher Gary Sanchez during the Angels' 6-4 win Tuesday in Anaheim, Calif., Tuesday.

really good catch in that situation, it's probably boom-boom."

Aaron Judge had an RBI single and Giancarlo Stanton added a sacrifice fly in the eighth, but New York (76-56) dropped eight games behind Tampa Bay (84-48) in the AL East standings. The Yankees'

four losses have been by a combined six runs, suggesting they aren't too far off their previous form — but that's little comfort with the Rays pulling away.

"Losing four in a row is obviously very frustrating, and just unacceptable," Brett Gardner said.

"We've obviously been playing very good baseball for a while now. We've been in the games and had opportunities to change the outcome, and just haven't been able to. Even though we've lost four in a row, we've won 13 of 17. That's how I choose to look at it."

ROUNDUP

Phils double up Nats for 5th straight win

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Bryce Harper hit a go-ahead single against his former team as part of a six-run sixth inning, Rafael Marchán, Andrew McCutchen and Brad Miller hit two-run homers, and the Philadelphia Phillies beat the Washington Nationals 12-6 for their fifth straight victory.

Carter Kieboom homered for Washington, which has lost four in a row and six of seven. The Nationals completed a 7-20 August, their worst full month since going 5-16 in April 2009.

Philadelphia took control against tiring starter Patrick Corbin (7-14) and Washington's erratic bullpen in the sixth. Corbin allowed six runs in five-plus innings.

Bailey Falter (2-0) pitched 1 ⅓ scoreless innings for the victory.

Rays 8, Red Sox 5: Randy Arozarena, rookie Wander Franco and Tampa Bay won their ninth straight game, breaking away from Boston soon after Red Sox shortstop Xander Bogaerts was pulled because of a positive COVID-19 test.

Bogaerts hit an RBI single in the first inning, but was replaced defensively in the second.

It was announced before the game that Boston reliever Hirokazu Sawamura tested positive as a virus surge that started last week continues having a daily impact on playoff-contending Boston.

Mets 3-6, Marlins 1-5: Michael Conforto delivered a two-out hit that sent Javier Báez bolting home to cap a five-run rally in the ninth inning, then homered to lift host New York over Miami for a pair of wins.



NICK WASS/AP

Philadelphia' Rafael Marchan, right, celebrates his two-run home run against the Washington Nationals with Matt Vierling during the Phillies' 12-6 road win Tuesday.

In the afternoon opener — which was the completion of a nine-inning game suspended one out into the top of the first on April 11 — Conforto's single scored the tying run and Báez, too.

Brewers 6, Giants 2: Lorenzo Cain homered and added an RBI single, and Milwaukee won its second straight at San Francisco.

All-Star right-hander Brandon Woodruff (9-7) struck out eight in six innings to win back-to-back starts for the first time since late June. He allowed five hits and one run with three walks.

Padres 3, Diamondbacks 0: Blake Snell threw seven no-hit innings for San Diego before being pulled, and pinch-hitter David Peralta blooped a single into shallow left field in the

eighth in a win at Arizona.

Dodgers 3, Braves 2: Corey Seager hit a tie-breaking double in the eighth inning, lifting Los Angeles to a victory over visiting Atlanta.

Athletics 9, Tigers 3: Matt Chapman hit a tie-breaking, two-run homer in the third inning and cleared the fences again in the ninth for his 23rd of the season, as Oakland won at Detroit.

Orioles 4, Blue Jays 2: Keegan Akin allowed one run through five innings and won consecutive starts for the first time, Ramón Urías hit a go-ahead double in the sixth inning, and Baltimore won at Toronto.

White Sox 4, Pirates 2: Yasmani Grandal and Jose Abreu homered, and five relievers combined for 4 ⅓ innings of two-hit ball as host Chicago doubled up Pittsburgh.

Indians 7, Royals 2: Amed Rosario became the first player on record to go 5-for-5 with five RBIs, an inside-the-park homer and a drive over the fence, and Cleveland won at Kansas City.

Rangers 4, Rockies 3: Nathaniel Lowe had a home run and an RBI single among his three hits, Leody Taveras homered for the second straight game and host Texas hung on to beat Colorado for its third straight win.

Cubs 3, Twins 1: Frank Schwindel homered for the second straight game, Ian Happ added a towering homer into the third deck, and Chicago won at Minnesota.

Mariners 4, Astros 0: Abraham Toro hit a grand slam against Kendall Gravemen, whom he he was traded for last month, connecting in the eighth and sending host Seattle over Houston.

US OPEN/COLLEGE FOOTBALL



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Serbia's Novak Djokovic hits balls into the stands after winning his first-round match Tuesday against the Netherlands' Holger Vitus Nodskov Rune at the US Open in New York.

Djokovic begins pursuit of calendar Slam's final leg

Drops set before winning opener

By HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

NEW YORK — If the last-name chorus of “Ruuuuuune!” in support of his relatively unknown teenage opponent at the U.S. Open bothered Novak Djokovic, he never let anyone know.

Nor was there any visible evidence that Djokovic was shaken by the shaky patches he went through while dropping a set Tuesday night as he began his historic bid to complete the first calendar-year Grand Slam in men's tennis since 1969 and collect a record-breaking 21st major singles championship.

Djokovic was not perfect — “It wasn't the best of my performances,” he acknowledged — but he didn't need to be. All he needed to do was win, and he did, just as he's done every time he's played a Grand Slam match this season, whether on the hard courts of the Australian Open, the red clay of the French Open, the grass of Wimbledon or, now, the first of what he hopes will be seven times on the hard courts of Flushing Meadows.

Quickly regaining control after a second-set blip, then wearing down his cramping foe, Djokovic beat Danish qualifier Holger Vitus Nodskov Rune 6-1, 6-7 (5), 6-2, 6-1 to reach the second round.

“I mean, obviously you always wish to have crowd behind you, but it's not always possible. That's all I

can say. I mean, I don't know; I've been focusing on myself and what I need to do,” said Djokovic, who next faces Tallon Griekspoor, a 25-year-old from the Netherlands ranked 121st who got into the field when Roger Federer pulled out. “I guess I have to just see how it feels on the court and try to keep it together. That's all I can do.”

Afterward, 2019 U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu closed out the first round by edging Viktorija Golubic 7-5, 4-6, 7-5 in a match that ended at 12:45 a.m. on Wednesday.

Earlier on Day Two, the top-seeded woman, Ash Barty, made a successful return to the site of one of the two Grand Slam tournaments she has yet to win.

The biggest holdup for Barty during her 6-1, 7-6 (7) victory over 2010 U.S. Open runner-up Vera Zvonareva came early in the first set. There was a delay of more than five minutes because the Hawk-Eye Live electronic line-calling system went down when a TV camera wasn't working.

The capable-of-combustion Djokovic, who chucked a racket into the stands while losing to Carreño Busta in the bronze medal match at the Tokyo Olympics a month ago, kept a steady countenance Tuesday, even as a set slipped away and there was applause for his faults during the tiebreaker.



JOHN MINCHILLO/AP

Australia's Ash Barty returns a shot to Russia's Vera Zvonareva during their first-round match.

Sure, there was an eye roll here or there. Puffed cheeks. A shake of his head. But otherwise, no outward betrayal of emotion.

Busta was a surprise first-round loser Tuesday. He was eliminated 5-7, 4-6, 6-1, 6-4, 7-6 (7) by Maxime Cressy, a Paris-born American ranked 151st. Cressy played college tennis at UCLA, as did Mackie McDonald, the American who defeated No. 27 seed David Goffin in straight sets.

In other action, the two Olympic tennis singles gold medalists won: Germany's Alexander Zverev extended his winning streak to 12 matches with a 6-4, 7-5, 6-2 victory over Sam Querrey, and Switzerland's Belinda Bencic beat Arantxa Rus 6-4, 6-4.

Free: Texas State adds 23 transfers to its roster

FROM PAGE 24

Florida State didn't just need an influx of talent. It needed veteran leadership and players who understand what it takes to compete at the highest levels of college football.

“And I'm excited to see how it's all going to come together,” Norvell said.

Among the most notable additions: Former UCF quarterback McKenzie Milton, who led the Knights through two unbeaten regular seasons before a gruesome leg injury nearly ended his career in 2018; Georgia defensive end Jermaine Johnson; and Notre Dame guard Dillan Gibbons.

Norvell told the new guys he needed them to be assertive and to set the tone when it came to practice, preparation and work ethic.

“I don't take that lightly,” Johnson said. “He's trusting me with an incredible role. My teammates trust me with an incredible role every day.”

If Florida State is to once again become an elite program that can rival Clemson in the Atlantic Coast Conference, it will need to get there through recruiting. There are positive signs on that front. Florida State currently holds 18 verbal commitments for the class of 2022, a group ranked 10th in the country by 247 Sports' composite ratings.

But there is a chicken-and-egg aspect to recruiting. To win, coaches need to recruit well. To recruit well, coaches need to win.

If Norvell is going to attract the type of players that helped Florida State win three national titles, the last in 2013 under Fisher, the Seminoles need to show progress in 2021.

Texas State went even deeper into the portal than Florida State. The Bobcats' last signing class had 23 transfers and just two high school players — an ominous sign for those who fear the transfer portal will harm prep recruiting.

Bobcats coach Jake Spavital

said the decision to load up in transfers does not reflect a long-term strategy. The combination of a very inexperienced roster and last year's pandemic eligibility freeze for current players led to the unique class.

“What we looked at with this portal is it gives us an opportunity to maybe do some immediate fixes, but it also allows us to get developmental kids that are coming from a Power Five (school) that have, because last year didn't count, five years to play four,” Spavital said.

For most programs, the transfer market is more for filling holes here and there than an extreme makeover.

At Indiana, Tom Allen's program is trending up after consecutive winning seasons. The No. 17 Hoosiers are bringing back many of the key players from last year's 6-2 team, but needed help at running back, on the edges of the defensive line and at receiver, where former Florida State receiver D.J. Matthews was among the additions.

Like a lot of coaches, Allen targets transfers the staff has recruited or coached before.

“I felt like we knew what we were getting character-wise,” Allen said.

Most of the 12 transfers from Division I schools who arrived in Lawrence between last season and this season could see the field when Kansas opens the season against South Dakota on Friday night.

“When the lights go on and the ball is kicked off, we'll truly get a baseline of where we're at — what we've done in our time here and where we need to go,” Leipold said this week. “There's I guess still unknowns, seeing how guys produce in game situations. How we handle adversity, how we handle success. I want to see us playing hard and giving good effort. We're going to compete hard no matter who is on the field.”



EVERT NELSON, THE TOPEKA CAPITAL-JOURNAL/AP

New Kansas coach Lance Leipold added 12 transfers to his roster, including several players he coached at Buffalo.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

High expectations for No. 11 Oregon

Favored to win third straight Pac-12 title

By **JOE REEDY**
Associated Press

Oregon coach Mario Cristobal knows his Ducks enter the new season bearing the burden of outside expectations. However, he focuses on the goals he has set instead of what others are saying.

While the 11th-ranked Ducks are predicted to win their third straight Pac-12 championship, he still wants his players to have the mindset that they're the hunters, not the hunted.

"I never and we will never see ourselves as a program with a bullseye on us, a target on us. It's never been that way, never will be that way," Cristobal said. "When we wake up in the morning, our feet hit the ground, we wake up with a hunger, drive, determination to make sure we're always a hunter in a humble way, driven way. All the other stuff, the fluff and the predictions, it doesn't factor into our regimen, our structure, our DNA, our

mentality."

Oregon is stacked at most positions and has two of the conference's top defensive players in defensive end Kayvon Thibodeaux and linebacker Noah Sewell, but quarterback remains a question. Anthony Brown, who started 28 games at Boston College, transferred to Oregon last year but sat behind starter Tyler Shough until he played in the Pac-12 championship game and the Fiesta Bowl.

Shough has transferred to Texas Tech, meaning Brown could be the third different Ducks signal-caller to deliver a championship. Justin Herbert led the Ducks to a Rose Bowl victory in 2019.

Oregon could help the Pac-12's chances of getting into the College Football Playoff for the first time since 2016 with an upset of No. 4 Ohio State on Sept. 11 in Columbus. The Pac-12 has four other teams ranked in the AP Top 25 — No. 15 Southern California, No. 20 Washington, No. 24 Utah and No. 25 Arizona State — but needs to have stronger showings in its marquee nonconference games.

Heat is on

USC athletic director Mike Bohn gave a vote of confidence to Clay Helton, but if Helton is to see a seventh full season leading the program, he at least needs to get the Trojans back to the conference title game.

The Trojans are stacked at the skill positions, including quarterback Kedon Slovis and wide receiver Drake London. They also have a



Ross D. FRANKLIN / AP

Oregon quarterback Anthony Brown, a sixth-year senior, is the team's likely starter.

favorable schedule that includes a road game at No. 9 Notre Dame but doesn't include Oregon or Washington.

"Our job right now is to get back to that championship game and to win that game because we know when we win that game, it opens the doors to the playoff and the national championship opportunities," Helton said.

Biggest questions

Arizona State returns all 11 defensive starters and nine on offense, including quarterback Jayden Daniels. Normally that type of talent would make the Sun Devils the preseason pick for the South Division, but they are under an NCAA investigation for illegal recruiting practices and have three assistant

coaches on paid leave.

Players to watch

Thibodeaux: The junior was the only unanimous selection to the preseason All-Conference team as well as being the conference's lone first-team representative on The Associated Press preseason All-America team.

London: The junior figures to be Slovis' top target after the departure of Amon-Ra St. Brown. London led the Trojans in receiving yards with 502 last season and has eight touchdowns in his two years as a starter.

Utah LB Devin Lloyd: The senior has led the team in tackles the past two seasons. His 10 solo tackles for loss last season were second in the conference.

UCLA QB Dorian

Thompson-Robinson: The senior has started 29 games the past four years. In the Bruins' 44-10 opening-game win over Hawaii last week, he tied Troy Aikman for seventh on UCLA's all-time touchdown passes list with 41, going 10-for-20 for 130 yards, adding 19 yards rushing.

Colorado RB Jarek Broussard: The sophomore rushed for 895 yards in six games and was the conference's Offensive Player of the Year last season.

Picks

North: Oregon, Washington, California, Stanford, Oregon State, Washington State.

West: USC, Utah, Arizona State, UCLA, Colorado, Arizona.

Champion: Oregon



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

Oregon defensive end Kayvon Thibodeaux was selected to The Associated Press Preseason All-America first-team defense.

No. 8 Cincinnati focuses on AAC over future talk

By **STEPHEN HAWKINS**
Associated Press

Cincinnati coach Luke Fickell knows all the talk about expected playoff expansion, conference realignment and the impact all of that could have on the American Athletic Conference.

For Fickell and the eighth-ranked Bearcats, those are future discussions.

"With all the things that are going on, we're trying to stay real focused on hey, what's the now, what's the immediacy," Fickell said. "Make sure we're focusing on what we need to do for 2021."

Dual-threat quarterback Desmond Ridder and All-America cornerback Ahmad Gardner are among 16 returning starters for defending AAC champion Cincinnati, the overwhelming favorite to repeat. It is the league's only ranked team and the first non-Power Five team in the preseason top 10 since 2012, starting this season in the same spot it ended last season.

The Bearcats are 31-6 over the past three seasons, with Ridder the starting QB for all of those wins. Their only loss last season was 24-



JOHN RAOUX/AP

Quarterback Desmond Ridder is one of 16 returning starters for defending AAC champion Cincinnati.

21 in the Peach Bowl when Georgia kicked a go-ahead field goal with three seconds remaining. It was the fifth time in seven seasons that the AAC had a team in a New Year's Six game.

No Group of Five team has made the four-team College Football Playoff, but Cincinnati could establish itself as a potential contender by midseason. It plays nonconference games

at No. 17 Indiana and No. 9 Notre Dame, then has its AAC home opener against UCF on Oct. 16.

UCF, with first-year coach Gus Malzahn and the only team to get any first-place votes in the media preseason poll, returns eight starters on both sides of the ball. They include standout junior quarterback Dillon Gabriel, who in two seasons has thrown for 7,223 yards and 61 touchdowns with only 11 interceptions.

Top runners and catchers

■ Tulsa senior RB Shamari Brooks is back after missing 2020 with an ACL injury. He rushed for 1,046 yards and six touchdowns in 2019.

■ SMU sophomore RB Ulysses Bentley IV led the conference as a freshman last season with 913 rushing yards (91.3 yards per game), and added 11 TDs. Only Ridder and Tulane running back Cameron Carroll had more rushing TDs, with 12 each. The Mustangs also return WR Reggie Roberson, who had 22 catches for 474 yards and five TDs in only four games before a season-ending left knee injury.

■ Calvin Austin III, a speedy senior receiver for Memphis, led the league with 11 receiving TDs last season. He finished with 63 catches for 1,053 yards (95.7 per game).

■ UCF junior Jaylon Robinson averaged 97.9 yards receiving in his 10 games. He finished with 55 catches, gaining 17.8 yards per catch.

Picks

Cincinnati and UCF were the clear 1-2 picks in the preseason poll, but things get jumbled after that.

SMU returns 18 starters even though quarterback Shane Buechele left for the NFL, going undrafted before signing with Kansas City. Houston has 20 starters after the Cougars last year had a half-dozen games affected by COVID-19 issues for other teams, and not even playing their four scheduled September games. Memphis has to replace longtime starting quarterback Brady White after going 8-3 last season, the follow-up to their Cotton Bowl/New Year's Six appearance in Ryan Silverfield's first game as head coach at the end of the 2019 season.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

No. 3 Tigers out to push ACC run to 7 straight

By AARON BEARD
Associated Press

James Skalski has been looking forward to third-ranked Clemson's opener against No. 5 Georgia on the same field where the Tigers maintain their Atlantic Coast Conference dominance.

"We usually end our regular season in Charlotte," the Tigers' linebacker said.

And there's no reason to expect otherwise in 2021, either.

Clemson is favored to win a seventh straight ACC championship in North Carolina's largest city by December. It is the headliner in a league that includes No. 10 North Carolina and No. 14 Miami as the only other teams in The Associated Press preseason Top 25 poll.

That run of dominance has made the Tigers the first power-conference team to win six straight league title games. It's also the longest run of ACC titles since Florida State won at least a share from 1992-2000 to start its stay in the league under late coach Bobby Bowden.

Last year's loss at Notre Dame — playing in a one-year stint as a full ACC member amid the COVID-19 pandemic — marked Clemson's first league loss in three years. Overall, the Tigers have 10 straight seasons with double-digit wins, six straight berths in the College Football Playoff and two national championships under Dabo Swinney.

This year's team has big names to replace — namely No. 1 overall draft pick Trevor Lawrence at quarterback and two-time ACC player of the year Travis Etienne at running back. That will mean plenty of attention on new starting quarterback D.J. Uiagalelei, who had big performances with Lawrence out briefly due to COVID-19 protocols last season.

But there's a defense with Skalski among nine returning starters. That includes a defensive line with seven players who have started games, including Myles Murphy, Brian Bresee, Xavier Thomas, Justin Foster and Tyler Davis.

"You see a bunch of young guys that have



JOSH MORGAN/AP

Clemson, under coach Dabo Swinney, is the first power-conference team to win six consecutive league title games.

really grown and improved with their confidence, improved with their understanding, improved with their technique, just playing within the system and letting the system help them," defensive coordinator Brent Venables said. "So it's been very pleasing to see the discipline show up."

If that continues into the season, Clemson will be ready to celebrate in Charlotte, N.C., again.

The favorites

Atlantic: Clemson. The Tigers are 52-3 against ACC teams during their current reign, with only one of those losses — in 2017 at Syracuse — coming in their division.

North Carolina State was picked second in the Atlantic, followed by Boston College, Florida State, Wake Forest, Louisville and

Syracuse.

Coastal: UNC. The Tar Heels start with a top-10 preseason ranking for the first time since 1997, which was the final season of coach Mack Brown's first stint with the Tar Heels. They have 18 starters back on offense and defense.

"I like to take it with a tremendous amount of pride," Brown said of high expectations. "Our fans can walk around right now with their chest stuck out because we're a preseason top-10 team. I don't take that as pressure."

Miami was picked second in the Coastal, followed by Virginia Tech, Pittsburgh, Virginia, Georgia Tech and Duke.

Top Players

Sam Howell, North Carolina: The junior quarterback is a candidate for the Heisman

Trophy as well as to be one of the top NFL Draft picks. He enters this year as the preseason ACC player of the year while powering UNC's high-scoring attack, and Brown has already indicated this will be his final season with the Tar Heels.

D.J. Uiagalelei, Clemson: Lawrence's sophomore successor has size (6 feet, 4 inches and 250 pounds) and threw for nearly 800 yards in two midseason starts last year. "He's a great leader and everybody has confidence in him," Swinney said. "He makes everyone around him better."

D'Eriq King, Miami: The quarterback is returning for a sixth season despite suffering a serious knee injury suffered in last year's bowl loss. He ranked in the Bowl Subdivision's top 25 in total offense and passing efficiency.

Payton Wilson, N.C. State: The linebacker led the league at 10.8 tackles per game (13th in FBS) and was one of nine players nationally with at least 19 tackles in a game.

Restocked

Thirteen of the 14 league teams have a returning quarterback with starting experience. The exception is Duke, which is set to turn to Gunnar Holmberg as the Blue Devils try to take better care of the football after committing an FBS-worst 39 turnovers last year.



GERRY BROOME/AP

Quarterback Sam Howell leads North Carolina, the Coastal Division favorite.

No. 9 Notre Dame turns to graduate transfer Coan

By JOHN FINERAN
Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — No quarterback since Tony Rice has delivered the goods Notre Dame's fanatical following has longed for since 1988 — a national championship.

Not Rick Mirer, not Kevin McDougal, not Ron Powlus, not Brady Quinn, not Tommy Rees, not Everett Golson, and not the winningest Irish starting quarterback of them all — Ian Book, who twice led coach Brian Kelly's team to the College Football Playoff.

When No. 9 Notre Dame opens its season Sept. 5 at Florida State, Book's successor — Jack Coan, a graduate transfer from Wisconsin — will be asked to end the drought.

"Going into our opener, (Coan) gives us the best chance for success," said Kelly, who begins his 12th season four victories short of passing Knute Rockne's 105 wins at the school.

The 22-year-old Coan, who beat



ROBERT FRANKLIN/AP

Jack Coan, a graduate transfer from Wisconsin, beat out sophomore Drew Pyne and freshman Tyler Buchner to be starting quarterback.

out sophomore Drew Pyne and true freshman Tyler Buchner, is eager for his chance at Notre Dame, where he once was offered a lacrosse scholarship.

"Never in a million years did I think I'd end up here after going to Wisconsin," said the 6-foot-3¼, 223-

pound former prep star from Sayville, N.Y.

In 2019 as a junior, Coan completed nearly 70% of his passes for 2,727 yards and 18 touchdowns against five interceptions during a 10-4 season for Paul Chryst's Badgers.

Coan was expected to be the start-

ing quarterback last season, but suffered a right foot injury in early October that required season-ending surgery. He transferred to Notre Dame in January.

Up front

With four-fifths of last year's starting offensive line now working in NFL camps, senior Jarrett Patterson returns as center. A preseason All-American, the 6-foot-4½, 307-pound Patterson missed the end of the 2020 season and all of spring recovering from foot surgery and is being reacquainted with his teammates who include 6-foot-2½, 310-pound grad transfer guard Cain Madden.

Offensive weapons

Williams will be spelled in the backfield by sophomore Chris Tyree, senior C'Bo Flemister, and true freshmen Audric Estime and Logan Diggs, who have been impressive. Sophomore Michael Mayer returns

after a breakout year to head a deep tight end group.

The wideouts will be led by Avery Davis, seniors Joe Wilkins Jr. and Lawrence Keys III, impressive freshman Deion Colzie and two seniors returning from injury-plagued 2020 seasons — speedsters Braden Lenzy and Kevin Austin Jr.

Defensive dude

Despite the loss of several starters including Butkus Award winner and rover Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah, new defensive coordinator Marcus Freeman has several players with plenty of experience. The best of them is the 6-foot-4, 220-pound junior free safety Kyle Hamilton, who missed the spring after ankle surgery following a 2020 season during which he led the team in tackles.

"I remember last season (cornerback coach Mike) Mickens called me and said 'We've got a dude that's special here,'" Freeman said.

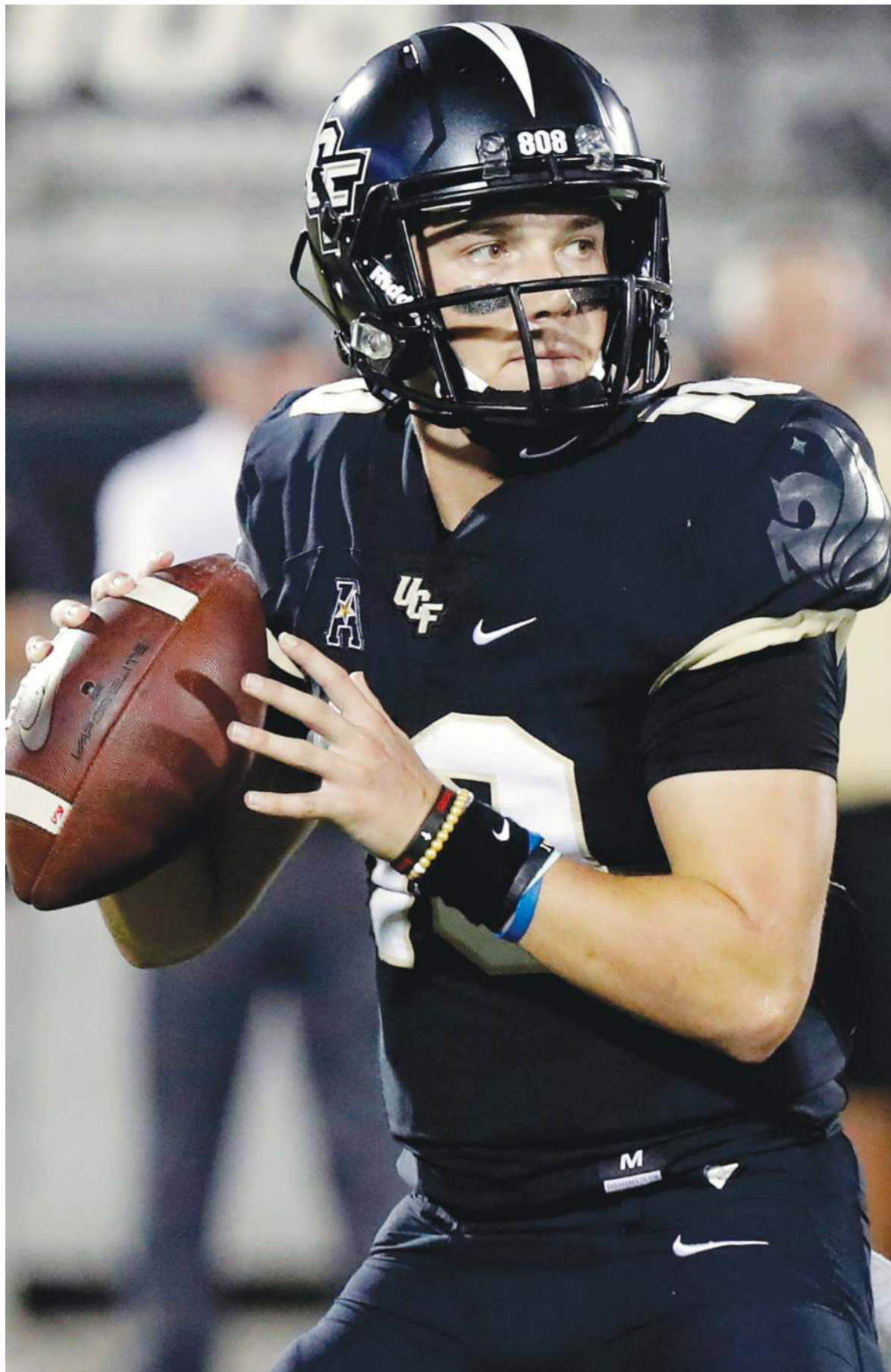
SPORTS



Causing a commotion

Meyer's comments on vaccine status have NFLPA investigating » **NFL, Page 20**

Free agency in college?



JOHN RAUX, ABOVE, AND STEVE CANNON, RIGHT/AP

Above: Quarterback McKenzie Milton decided to transfer to Florida State after leading Central Florida through two unbeaten regular seasons. A gruesome leg injury nearly ended his career in 2018. Right: Wide receiver D.J. Matthews, carrying the football, left Florida State for Indiana.

New transfer rule results in roster transformations

By RALPH D. RUSSO
Associated Press

Ideally, Florida State coach Mike Norvell will never need to build his team this way again.

The Seminoles have 14 transfers with more than 330 games of college experience on the roster after going 3-6 in Norvell's first year in Tallahassee.

When Florida State opens its season Sunday night at home against No. 9 Notre Dame, the 'Noles could have as many as six players who were at other schools last year in the starting lineup.

"I think a lot of it had to do with kind of where we were in the moment. We came off last year when we were the youngest team in college football. I mean, there's been quite a bit of change around our program," Norvell told The Associated Press.

This season will be the first since the NCAA tweaked its rules to give all football players the freedom to transfer once in their careers and be immediately eligible to play at their new school — no questions asked.

After years of incremental steps to loosen restrictions around transfers, full-on college football



Norvell

free agency is here. Teams can now revamp rosters and bolster depth charts in a manner similar to the way it is done in the NFL.

No team has more riding on transfers this season than Florida State, though there are others. Michigan State's second-year head coach, Mel Tucker, brought a bunch of new players into the program via the portal and had about a dozen go out. Kansas also has a dozen transfers on the roster for new coach Lance Leipold, who lured several of his players from Buffalo to Lawrence.

But Tucker and Leipold are not facing the same win-now pressure as Norvell. The once-mighty Seminoles have had three straight losing seasons and two head coaches since Jimbo Fisher left for Texas A&M at the end of the 2017 season.

The instability has taken a toll on recruiting and led to roster attrition. Facing another year of relying on inexperienced players to quickly blossom, Norvell decided

SEE FREE ON PAGE 21



Angels extend Yankees' skid to 4 games » MLB, Page 19

