

Army reviewing complaint officer made racial insults

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The U.S. Army in Europe confirmed that it is investigating allegations by a battalion executive officer, who says a lieutenant colonel based in Grafenwoehr made racial insults about Black people under her command.

“The U.S. Army prioritizes respect and professionalism, and has zero tolerance for unlawful discrimination,” Lt. Col. Michael Weisman, spokesman for 7th Army Training Command, said in a statement. “Any allegations of this nature are taken seriously, and these allegations are under investigation.”

At issue is an Equal Opportunity complaint by Maj. Tiffany Mohammed, who said that while she was serving as the executive officer of the 589th Brigade Support Battalion she was called a “stupid little Black girl” by her boss during an April 16 meeting.

Mohammed also said that during an October farewell dinner for a soldier in the unit, she and another soldier overheard the commander ask, “Why are Black people always late?” while awaiting the arrival of an African American service member.

Mohammed is of Indian descent, but said her dark skin has caused her to be mistaken for African American.

The EO complaint was found to be unsubstantiated in May by an Army investigating officer,

but that decision has been appealed and is under high-level review. Stars and Stripes is withholding the name of the battalion commander pending the review.

The relationship between the two had deteriorated months earlier, Mohammed said, after her boss accused her of filing an unrelated Inspector’s General complaint.

When Mohammed said she wasn’t the one who made that complaint, her commander laughed and said, “you’re a stupid little Black girl,” according to Mohammed’s sworn EO statement.

The commander denied making the remarks about Black people.

Mohammed’s EO complaint also references an earlier incident in October in which the commander is accused of saying within earshot “Why are Black people always late?”

Mohammed said she and another soldier, Erik Choron, were seated near their boss during a farewell dinner at a restaurant for another soldier when the incident happened.

Choron, who served as a first sergeant in the battalion until he recently moved to Fort Hood, said the comment took him by surprise.

Several other soldiers who were seated nearby gave sworn statements that they never heard the battalion commander make the statement about Black people.

INDOPACOM says US has capability to defend Taiwan

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The United States is capable of assisting and defending Taiwan in the event of a military crisis, the commander of all U.S. forces in the Pacific said Thursday.

“There is a narrative that we see often in the media that talks about the U.S. and the West in decline,” Adm. John Aquilino, head of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, said during a virtual appearance at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado when asked to describe America’s ability to defend Taiwan.

“I think what I’d start with is that that narrative is certainly being pushed by our adversaries,” Aquilino said. “I want to be very clear — we have the world’s greatest military on the planet.

“We are here to continue to operate to ensure peace and prosperity through the region, and we have to be in a position to ensure that status quo remains as it applies to Taiwan.”

Aquilino said Beijing’s heavy-handed actions in Hong Kong since last year have heightened his concern over China’s intentions toward Taiwan, which the Communist Party of China regards as a renegade province that must, at some point, become reunified with the mainland.

Beijing had guaranteed a degree of autonomy for Hong Kong when the British government turned the colony over to China in 1997. But last summer it imposed a new security law that was quickly used to imprison and harass pro-democracy advocates. The move has left many international observers wondering if Beijing is

planning overt military action to reunify Taiwan.

The U.S. State Department on Wednesday approved the sale of about \$750 million in arms to Taiwan, the first such sale by President Joe Biden’s administration. It includes 40 self-propelled howitzers.

The sale “interferes in China’s internal affairs and undermines China’s sovereignty and security interests,” a spokesman for China’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement posted online Thursday.

“China will resolutely take legitimate and necessary counter-measures in light of the development of the situation,” said the statement, which offered no further details.

In light of China’s more aggressive posture toward Taiwan, Hong Kong and the contested South China Sea, questions about how the U.S. would respond to a military crisis in the Taiwan Strait are no longer academic.

During a conference call with reporters Sunday while in Guam, Gen. Charles Flynn, commander of U.S. Army Pacific, was asked whether soldiers could rapidly deploy “in case Taiwan is invaded by China.”

“The Army is always able to rapidly deploy,” Flynn said. “And we have a range of forces out here in the Pacific — from forcible entry forces to motorized forces to sustainment, communications, cyber, electronic warfare, intelligence — all ranges of capabilities within the Army, that can move at speed and at scale, to conduct operations across the region.”

Retired Marine whose troops planted US flag on Iwo Jima dies

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Dave Severance, the Marine company commander whose troops planted the American flag on Iwo Jima during World War II, a moment captured in one of the most iconic war photographs in history, has died. He was 102.

Severance died last Monday at his home in the San Diego suburb of La Jolla, according to the San Diego Union-Tribune.

Severance's company came ashore in the 10th wave of what eventually would be about 70,000 Marines invading the island, about 660 miles south of Tokyo. They were met by some 20,000 Japanese.

On Feb. 23, 1945, the fifth day of fighting, about 40 members of Severance's company were sent up Mount Suribachi with orders to plant the flag.

When Navy Secretary James Forrestal, arrived on the island, he asked for it to be kept as a memento.

After it was removed, Severance ordered a second group of Marines to replace the flag with a bigger one. The second raising of the flag on Mount Suribachi was captured in a dramatic photo by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal who won a Pulitzer Prize.

The Marines would keep the first flag, and the Navy secretary would get the replacement, which flew over Mount Suribachi for the rest of the battle. Both flags are now at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, Va.

Severance spent his retirement quietly trying to set the record straight that there were two flag-raising that February morning in 1945.

He cared about the flag story, he told the Union-Tribune in a 2012 interview, because it spoke to the courage and sacrifice he witnessed every day for more than a month during the battle, one of the bloodiest of the war. About 75 percent of his company were wounded or killed.

Severance earned a Silver Star.

He retired from the Marine Corps in 1968.

Probe clears brigade command of misconduct

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The leadership of an Army aviation brigade has been cleared of wrongdoing following a lengthy investigation into misconduct complaints, the 18th Airborne Corps said last week.

The 101st Airborne Division's Combat Aviation Brigade, which came under scrutiny in April after soldiers on an official trip visited a Polish strip club where a senior battalion officer went missing, was probed after various complaints were filed against the command.

"An exhaustive, months-long follow-on investigation led by a brigadier general identified no adverse findings against Colonel Travis Habhab or his subordinate leaders," Capt. Javon Starnes, a spokesman for 18th Airborne Corps, said in a statement.

Habhab is the commander of the Fort Campbell, Ky.-based brigade, which in April completed a nine-month rotation to

Europe in support of the military's Atlantic Resolve campaign, focused on deterring Russian aggression.

Bullying, instances of suicidal thoughts at the brigade's headquarters company and drunken carousing by officers were among the problems reported within the unit, according to internal command documents and Inspector General complaints obtained by Stars and Stripes.

In May, the Fort Bragg, N.C.-based 18th Airborne Corps sent a senior officer to Fort Campbell to investigate allegations of wrongdoing, the nature of which were not disclosed by the command.

But during the brigade's Europe rotation, there were indications of a morale problem. A command climate survey of the brigade's headquarters company conducted during the Europe deployment found that 44% of those polled "reported knowledge" of suicidal thoughts and 25% reported some type of bullying behavior in the unit.

UK aircraft carrier Queen Elizabeth, strike group make port call on Guam

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth and its strike group made a port call Friday at U.S. Naval Base Guam, one of the group's many stops as it moves across the Indo-Pacific.

Royal Navy Commodore Steve Moorhouse, commander of the strike group, said in a U.S. Navy news release Friday that the group has visited more than 20 nations since it departed the United Kingdom in May.

"Our visit to Guam provides an opportunity for some much-deserved rest and recreation," he said. "We are grateful to the U.S. Navy for the use of their facilities, and we look forward to exploring this beautiful Pacific Island."

Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero welcomed the strike group, while Naval Base Guam commander Capt. Mike Luckett de-

scribed the group's deployment as "an incredible and historic milestone for both the Royal Navy and the U.S. Navy," according to the release.

U.K. sailors will follow Naval Base Guam's policies and local regulations, including coronavirus preventative measures, during their stay, according to the Navy.

The strike group's stop in Guam concludes roughly the first third of the group's deployment, which is slated to cover 26,000 nautical miles over 7½ months and visits to 40 nations.

The Queen Elizabeth is escorted by numerous Royal Navy vessels, the Royal Netherlands Navy frigate HNLMS Evertsen and the guided-missile destroyer USS The Sullivans. F-35B Lightning II aircraft from Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 211 are also embarked on the ship.

US bases in Italy enact new virus restrictions

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — New COVID-19 restrictions for entry into restaurants and other venues took effect Friday on U.S. military installations throughout Italy, much the same as they did in the rest of the country.

Service members at U.S. Army Garrison Italy, headquartered in Vicenza, must be vaccinated to eat in the food court or at restaurants, or use the gym and movie theater, according to a recent general order.

Unit leaders will conduct spot checks for vaccination cards, garrison officials said.

Proof of a negative coronavirus test or recovery from the virus isn't being accepted for entry under the Army general order, but officials were discussing whether to amend the order to include those alternatives, a garrison spokesman said.

Requirements at Naval Support Activity Naples and Aviano Air Base for the same activities were more consistent with an Italian decree requiring people 12 and older to show one of the following: proof of vaccination, recovery from COVID-19 within the last six months or a negative test within the past 48 hours.

The requirements were approved by Italy last month to stem the rise in COVID-19 case numbers fueled by the highly contagious delta variant.

People who meet the requirements are eligible for Italy's "green pass" certification, allowing them inside restaurants, museums, bars, sports arenas and other places.

The U.S. Embassy in Italy announced this week that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention vaccination card would be accepted as equivalent to the green pass.

Military officials have said they are working with Italy to allow vaccinated Americans to be registered in the Italian green pass system, but they aren't sure when or if that will happen.

The documentation requirements don't apply to entry for exchange stores, commissaries, hospitals, religious services, schools or day care centers at the Italy installations. Most outdoor activities will not be affected, military officials said.

At NSA Naples Capodichino, signs explaining the requirements were posted Friday just inside the door at the Bella Napoli food court.

The base said a "watch team" will spot-check documentation at food courts and restaurants at Capodichino and its support site in Gricignano di Aversa.

But in other cases, such as at the gym, indoor pool or bowling alley, NSA Naples warned people that they could be asked to show verification at the door.

At the Capodichino gym, an attendant was verifying certification Friday.

Base officials said they will check certification at the movie theater and warned people not to buy tickets online if they couldn't show documentation. They advised people to carry paperwork, such as a CDC card, or have clear photos of their documents.

Aviano Air Base officials said personnel will check for vaccine documentation at all venues where they are necessary for entry, during a Facebook town hall meeting Thursday.

Those who violate the measure can be fined up to \$1,000, base officials said.

Taliban overrun three provincial Afghan capitals

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
AND ZUBAIR BABAKARKHAIL
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban overran three provincial capitals in Afghanistan on Sunday, including the strategic northern city of Kunduz, officials said. They are the latest in a string of battlefield wins by the insurgents, who have stepped up attacks as American troops withdraw from the country.

Kunduz — a key commercial hub with a population of more than 350,000 people and capital of a province with the same name — is the biggest city to fall to the Taliban since the withdrawal of international forces began in May.

The Taliban released inmates from the local prison after entering the city, while offices of the provincial governor and police chief were evacuated, Maj. Abdul Hadi, a spokesman for the Afghan military in Kunduz, told Stars and Stripes.

Heavy fighting between Taliban fighters and Afghan security forces continued throughout the day, according to witnesses.

All government facilities but the city's airport and main army barracks had fallen to the Taliban as of Sunday afternoon, provincial council member Abdul Ahad Torial Kakar said in a telephone interview. But fighting around the airport was ongoing, Kakar said.

The Taliban on Sunday also seized the capital of neighboring Takhar province, Taloqan, after heavy fighting in several areas, local officials said.

And Sar-e-Pul, the capital of another northern province with the same name, was a third provincial capital to fall to the Taliban the same day.

US military on Guam reimposes mask mandate

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

Military installations on Guam reimposed their mask policies after a spike in new cases of the coronavirus, just a week after the civilian government relaxed many of its pandemic restrictions.

All personnel on Defense Department installations, which include Naval Base Guam and Andersen Air Force Base, must wear masks indoors or outdoors when someone from another household is present, according

to a statement Wednesday by Joint Region Marianas.

Masks are not required during physical training, the joint region said.

The policy applies to anyone on a DOD installation, regardless of vaccination status, according to the statement, which attributed the about-face to "an increase in COVID-19 positive cases among military members," along with an increase in operational tempo and an influx of temporarily assigned personnel.

About 4,000 troops, including soldiers from the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division, 1st Special Forces Group and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, took part in the monthlong Forager 21 exercise on Guam that started in late July.

Service members and Defense personnel on temporary duty are restricted to their installations except for official duties, according to the order, unless they are fully vaccinated or have recovered from COVID-19 in the past three months and are free of symptoms.

US averaging 100K new virus cases a day

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — The COVID-19 outbreak in the United States crossed 100,000 new confirmed daily infections Saturday, a milestone last exceeded during the winter surge and driven by the highly transmissible delta variant and low vaccination rates in the South.

Health officials fear that cases, hospitalizations and deaths will continue to soar if more Americans don't embrace the vaccine. Nationwide, 50% of residents are fully vaccinated and more than 70% of adults have received at least one dose.

"Our models show that if we don't (vaccinate people), we could be up to several hundred thousand cases a day, similar to

our surge in early January," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director Rochelle Walensky said on CNN last week.

It took the U.S. about nine months to cross 100,000 average daily cases in November before peaking at about 250,000 in early January. Cases bottomed out in June, averaging about 11,000 per day, but six weeks later the number is 107,143.

Hospitalizations and deaths are also increasing, though all are still below peaks seen early this year before vaccines became widely available. More than 44,000 Americans are currently hospitalized with COVID-19, according to the CDC, up 30% in a week and nearly four times the number in June. More than 120,000 were hospitalized

in January.

The seven-day average for deaths rose from about 270 deaths per day two weeks ago to nearly 500 a day as of Friday, according to Johns Hopkins University. Deaths peaked at 3,500 per day in January. Deaths usually lag behind hospitalizations, as the disease normally takes a few weeks to kill.

The situation is particularly dire in the South, which has some of the lowest vaccination rates in the U.S. and has seen smaller hospitals overrun with patients.

In the Southeast, the number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients jumped 50% to a daily average of 17,600 over the last week from 11,600 the previous week, the CDC said. Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi,

North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky represent 41% of the nation's new hospitalizations, the CDC said, twice their overall share of the population.

Alabama and Mississippi have the lowest vaccination rates in the country: less than 35% of residents are fully inoculated, according to the Mayo Clinic. Georgia, Tennessee and the Carolinas are all in the lowest 15 states.

Alabama saw more than 65,000 doses wasted because health providers couldn't find people to take them before they expired, according to State Health Officer Scott Harris. That represents less than 1.5% of the more than 5 million coronavirus vaccines doses that Alabama has received.

Senate work on bipartisan infrastructure bill continues

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senators resumed a weekend session toward passage of a \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure package after running into opposition from a few Republicans who want to drag out final votes on one of President Joe Biden's top priorities.

The measure would provide what Biden has called a "historic investment" in public works programs, from roads and bridges to broadband internet access, drinking water and more. In a rare stroke of bipartisanship, Republicans joined Democrats on Saturday to advance the measure and more votes were expected Sunday. If approved, the bill would go to the House.

Despite the overwhelming support, momentum has dragged as a few Republican senators refused to yield 30 hours of required debate be-

fore the next set of procedural votes, which could delay swift passage of the package and result in a dayslong slog.

Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., a negotiator on the bill, said about 17 to 18 Republicans have indicated they support the bill, which would ensure eventual passage, though that may not come until Tuesday.

"It could go quicker, but it's going," Cassidy said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union," adding, "And that's the good thing, it's going."

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., has said he intends to get the bill done one way or another.

"We can get this done the easy way or the hard way," he said Saturday. Still, as the hours ticked away with no deal struck to quicken the process for considering amendments and final votes, Schumer said senators would resume at noon Sunday.

Crime historian conducts dig for D.B. Cooper case evidence

Associated Press

VANCOUVER, Wash. — Nearly 50 years after skyjacker D.B. Cooper vanished out the back of a Boeing 727 into freezing Northwest rain — wearing a business suit, a parachute and a pack with \$200,000 in cash — a crime historian is conducting a dig on the banks of the Columbia River in Vancouver, Wash., in search of evidence.

KOIN reported that Eric Ullis, a self-described expert on the infamous D.B. Cooper case, began a two-day dig on Friday. Ullis and four volunteers are searching for evidence about 10 to 15 yards away from where a boy found \$6,000 of Cooper's ransom money in 1980.

Ullis said his theory is that Cooper buried the parachutes, an attache case and the money at the same time, but dug smaller holes instead of one large one.

On Nov. 24, 1971, the night before Thanksgiving, a man described as being in his mid-40s with dark sunglasses and an olive complexion boarded a flight

from Portland, Ore., to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. He bought his \$20 ticket under the name "Dan Cooper," but an early wire-service report misidentified him as "D.B. Cooper," and the name stuck.

Sitting in the rear of the plane, he handed a note to a flight attendant after takeoff. "Miss, I have a bomb and would like you to sit by me," it said.

The man demanded \$200,000 in cash plus four parachutes. He received them at Sea-Tac, where he released the 36 passengers and two of the flight attendants. The plane took off again at his direction, heading slowly to Reno, Nev., at the low height of 10,000 feet. Somewhere, apparently over southwestern Washington, Cooper lowered the aircraft's rear stairs and jumped.

He was never found. But a boy digging on a Columbia River beach in 1980 discovered three bundles of weathered \$20 bills — nearly \$6,000 in all. It was Cooper's cash, according to the serial numbers.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman found swimming in 70-foot-tall water tank

AL ATHENS — A woman who broke through a barrier and climbed a ladder to the top of a municipal water tank was found swimming inside the massive container, authorities said.

A statement from the city of Athens said that after a contractor repainted the 350,000-gallon tank, an access hatch apparently wasn't secured properly.

A retired police officer contacted authorities after seeing the woman scale the 70-foot-tall tank, and firefighters found her swimming inside.

Police Chief Floyd Johnson said officers took the woman, who wasn't identified, for a mental evaluation. Workers planned to drain the tank and sanitize it, the city said, but no disruption in water service was expected and other tanks had clean water.

Airline starts direct, nonstop seaplane flights

MA BOSTON — Travelers between New York and Boston tired of the time-consuming hassles of crowded airports and commercial flights now have a more convenient, albeit pricey, alternative.

Tailwind Air has started direct, nonstop seaplane service between Manhattan and Boston Harbor.

Although the seaplanes can cut total travel times up to 60%, flights start at \$395 one way, which includes a standard-sized rolling bag up to 20 pounds.

The service is also dog friendly.

University pays balances of nearly 3K students

WV INSTITUTE — A university in West Virginia used federal relief funds to pay off account balances for nearly 3,000 students who have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

West Virginia State University paid off balances for all degree-seeking undergraduate and graduate students from March 13, 2020, through the summer 2021 term, WSAZ-TV reported. The school used \$816,000 from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, which covered tuition, housing and other fees.

The funds will be automatically applied to eligible student accounts, school officials said.

Human remains found in car in river for decades

NH LANCASTER — Human remains have been found in a car in the Connecticut River that may belong to a New Hampshire woman who disappeared in 1978.

A New Hampshire Fish and Game search team using new sonar equipment found the car south of a bridge that connects Lancaster and Lunenburg, Vt. The remains were found after a difficult search due to the vehicle's deterioration and the amount of silt inside it, officials said.

Investigators said the car's license plate matched one registered to Alberta Leeman, 63, of Gorham, N.H., who disappeared in 1978. Her disappearance is not considered suspicious.

The car was not removed

from the river because officials were concerned it would break into pieces under the stress of moving it.

Whale dies 3 months after move to States

CT MYSTIC — One of five beluga whales acquired from an aquarium in Canada after a legal fight with animal rights activists has died at its new home in Connecticut.

Officials at Mystic Aquarium, which specializes in beluga research, said in a Facebook post that the male whale had arrived in May with a preexisting medical condition. It died despite "round-the-clock medical treatment, testing, and 24-hour monitoring," the aquarium said in a statement.

Connecticut-based Friends of Animals and other activists had sought to block the transport in a lawsuit last fall against the U.S. Commerce secretary and National Marine Fisheries Service, which had approved the research permit.

The group claimed the U.S. permit violated the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the National Environmental Policy Act because government officials did not adequately address the potential harm to the belugas from being moved to Mystic.

Man arrested after Native American statue stolen

MO KANSAS CITY — A man has been charged with receiving stolen property after Kansas City police recovered pieces of a statue of a Native American woman that was stolen.

The public helped detectives find a large section of the 400-pound, 7-foot-tall statue but it had already been cut into pieces, police said.

The statue was sheared from its bolts at the Francois Chouteau and Native American Heritage Fountain in northern Kansas City, police said.

It has an estimated value of \$80,000.

The fountain honors American Indians and French trader Francois Chouteau for their roles in founding Kansas City.

Worker death leads to \$11K fine for winery

OR SALEM — Oregon's Occupational Safety and Health Agency said it fined a Dundee winery \$11,100 for alleged violations of confined space rules after an investigation into the death of a worker.

A worker at Corus Estates & Vineyards LLC, also known as 12th & Maple Wine Co., was found unresponsive Feb. 1 in an empty 30,000-gallon wine tank, the Statesman Journal reported.

The man's task was to enter through the bottom and pump out about 500 gallons of wine remnants into another tank.

Low-pressure nitrogen gas was pumped in to prevent oxidation of the remnants and the man was asphyxiated as a result of the displacement of oxygen due to the nitrogen gas in the tank, according to OSHA.

OSHA has given Corus Estates & Vineyards 10 days to correct nine alleged violations. The winery said it plans to appeal the citations.

— From wire reports

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Surreal 2020 Tokyo Games finally end

Associated Press

The cauldron will be snuffed Sunday on the exhausting, enlivening, sometimes enraging 2020 Tokyo Olympics — held, actually, in 2021. These are the Games that were to be tolerated, not celebrated.

They will be both.

Imperfect but not impossible, these Olympics — willed into existence despite a pandemic that sparked worldwide skepticism and hard-wired opposition from Japan's own citizens — just might go down as the Games that changed sports for good.

These became the Olympics where the athletes had their say. The Games' mental health became as important as physical. The Olympics where tales of perseverance — spoken, documented and discussed loudly and at length — often overshadowed actual performance.

It wasn't only those who stood on the medals stand at the hyper-scrutinized pressure cooker in Tokyo, where spit tests for COVID-19 and sleeping on cardboard-framed beds were part of the daily routine. It was all of them.

Their voices were heard, in big ways and small, through hundreds of reminders that their mental and physical health were not for sale, not even to the \$15.5 billion behemoth that underwrites many of their grandest dreams.

Those voices were notably reflected in the words of Simone Biles, who, early on, reset the conversation when she pulled out of the gymnastics meet, declaring that her well-being was more important than medals.

"It was something that was so out of my control. At end of the day, my mental and physical health is better than any med-

al," said Biles, who benched herself while battling "the twists."

And by Naomi Osaka, the tennis player who lit the cauldron on Day 1, but only after spending the summer insisting that the world listen to her — really listen — instead of only watching her on the court. The planet's highest-paid female athlete and the host country's poster girl, she faced expectations that were hard to handle.

Hundreds of athletes found some way to use their voices in ways they hadn't considered until the Tokyo Games — and the seismic 18 months that led up to it — all but commanded it.

They learned to talk about what it felt like to make sacrifices and accommodations for four years, then five, to come to the Games without friends and family, to put themselves out there and to know they will be

judged not on who they are, but on how fast they run, how well they shoot or whether they stick the landing.

"I've been afraid that my worth is tied to whether or not I win or lose," Allyson Felix wrote the morning before her bronze-medal run in the 400 meters made her the most decorated female track athlete in Olympic history. "But right now, I've decided to leave that fear behind. To understand that I am enough."

They came in all shapes and sizes. A transgender weightlifter, a nonbinary skateboarder and Quinn, the first openly transgender Olympian to win a gold medal. Teenage skateboarders, and surfers seeking gnarly waves — most of whom never dreamed of being on the Olympic stage, hugging and sharing tips and reminding us all that this is supposed to be fun.

US earns gold in Bird's last Games

Associated Press

SAITAMA, Japan — Sue Bird and Diana Taurasi walked off the basketball court together, arm-in-arm, one last time at the Tokyo Games.

They started their journey together five Olympics ago and ended it in the same fashion as always — with gold medals hanging around their necks.

"All of what we've done for USA Basketball, we've done together. It's fitting," Bird said after the 90-75 win over Japan on Sunday.

And now it's over — at least for the 40-year-old Bird.

"The best comparison is college since you know it's the end," Bird said. "Now I always have a wonderful feeling and a great taste in my mouth my senior year. That's how it is with USA Basketball."

All she and Taurasi have done on the international stage is win, and now the pair stands alone with five gold medals — the first basketball players ever to accomplish that feat.

"It's 20 years and people only get to see these moments," Taurasi said. "We're on

these trips every day together, every conversation, this means a lot to us."

While Bird is retiring from international basketball, Taurasi left the door open after the game in her on-court interview that she'll play in Paris in 2024.

She isn't actually certain she'll play, saying: "We'll see."

Bird threw a quick jab at her 39-year-old friend for even considering it.

"Hahaha, idiot," Bird said laughing while standing next to Taurasi.

The United States has now won the last seven Olympic gold medals matching the country's men's program for the most ever in a row. The men did it from 1936-68.

With Bird orchestrating the flow of games and Taurasi's scoring, they have been a constant force for the U.S., providing stability for the women's program since the 2004 Athens Games. They have won all 38 of the games at the Olympics they've competed in.

The names have changed around the pair, including greats Lisa Leslie, Sheryl Swoopes, Tina Thompson, Tamika Catchings and Sylvia Fowles, but the results haven't.

US women down Brazil for their 1st gold in volleyball

Associated Press

TOKYO — Jordan Larson fell to the floor, put her head in her hands and cried after Brazil couldn't return her spike on match point.

The frustration of being so close but not quite good enough was replaced by a feeling of relief after the U.S. women's volleyball team finally claimed Olympic gold with a 25-21, 25-20, 25-14 victory over Brazil on Sunday.

"I'm just still in a state of shock," Larson said. "I cried more in the last 24 hours than I think I have in my career. I'm not an emotional player, an emotional person. But I think just the emotions got the best of me. I'm now in kind of this euphoria, a state of shock."

The United States, which had won three silver medals and two bronze since first getting on the medal stand in 1984, got to the top step by beating the team that denied it a chance at gold in the final match of the 2008 and 2012 Olympics.

Hall class has something for everyone

Associated Press

CANTON, Ohio — From bone-rattling tacklers Troy Polamalu, Steve Atwater and Cliff Harris to hard-charging runner Edgerrin James to the pass-catching brilliance of Isaac Bruce and Harold Carmichael, the Pro Football Hall of Fame class of 2020 has something for everyone.

Blocking dynamos Steve Hutchinson and Jim Covert, Steel Curtain stalwart safety Donnie Shell and such leaders as former NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue and coaches Bill Cowher and Jimmy Johnson were also in the mix.

They all entered the hall Saturday night, a year late due to the COVID-19 pandemic, yet just as rewarding.

"If you told me after I graduated from the University of Michigan that I'd be excited standing in Ohio in the middle of August," Hutchinson joked, "...to me, there's no place better than Canton, Ohio."

Certainly all 12 men enshrined on this night felt that way.

"I am humbled and honored to wear this gold jacket," Atwater said before looking around at the other Hall of Famers on the stage. "What a group we have up here."

Indeed.

Polamalu had a 12-season career filled with spectacular performances, leadership and, well, winning with the Steelers. The 16th overall draft pick in 2003 from Southern California, he played in three Super Bowls, winning two, and made the NFL's 2000s Team of the Decade.

"I love football. It was my entire life as long as I can remember," said Polamalu, who missed festivities earlier this week after testing positive for COVID-19; he was medically cleared to attend Saturday. The crowd of 18,383 cheered long and loudly for him, delaying his speech.

He then talked about the "willingness to push beyond what the brain says is possible for the body. Football challenged me mentally, physically and spiritu-

ally. I had to succeed to quench this desire."

Atwater, who won two Super Bowls with Denver, might have been the most physical defensive back of his era, just as the Cowboys' Harris and Shell might have been in theirs.

Shell was a linebacker at South Carolina State who went undrafted, was shifted to safety in Pittsburgh and became a tackling machine. With veterans on strike in his rookie year of 1974, Shell made such an impression that coach Chuck Noll inserted him as a starting safety. He spent 14 seasons as a fixture for the Steelers.

With hundreds of Terrible Towels waving, Shell recognized Steeler Nation and then said of being an undrafted free agent from South Carolina State, "When facts get in the way of your goal, you must go against the grain to achieve your goal."

It was a big night for Pittsburgh as Shell, Polamalu and Cowher were enshrined as Steelers, and Covert went to Pitt,

where he blocked for Dan Marino.

"What a weekend for the Pittsburgh Steelers," Cowher said as Terrible Towels waved throughout the stadium. "It is unbelievable to me to go in the Hall of Fame with two guys you drafted: Troy Polamalu and Alan Faneca. Also with Donnie Shell and the late, great Bill Nunn."

Cowher also paid tribute to "the only head coach I ever worked for," the late Marty Schottenheimer, predicting "one day you will be in the Hall of Fame."

Hutchinson was a five-time All-Pro and member of the NFL 2000s All-Decade Team. Along with strong work as a pass protector, he opened holes for rushers who averaged just under 1,400 yards and 14 touchdowns a season.

After joking about potentially being uncomfortable in Hall of Fame Stadium, Hutchinson then told his son not to "fear failure, but fear to have not given my all."

US boxers finish just short of gold

Associated Press

TOKYO — Richard Torrez Jr. stared up at 6-foot-7 Bakhodir Jalolov and didn't blink, courageously holding his own and staying on his feet against the most intimidating fighter in Tokyo.

Keyshawn Davis and Andy Cruz traded shots for three thrilling rounds, showing off some of the most polished boxing skills in the entire Olympics.

The final two Americans in the Tokyo field got agonizingly close to ending their team's 17-year men's gold medal drought Sunday, only to fall short against two of the best boxers who stepped into the Kokugikan Arena.

Torrez and Davis still leave Japan believing they've started a new era for the once-dominant U.S. team with its best Olympic showing in decades.

"We came in here and did some things that a lot of people probably thought we weren't going to do," super heavyweight Torrez said after his 5-0 loss to Jalolov in the final bout of

the tournament.

"We're putting boxing back into the USA," he added. "We're giving it a surge again. I can't be more proud of my teammates. I do think we came out here and we fueled the amateur scene in the U.S."

The team coached by Billy Walsh is leaving Tokyo with four medals — the most won by the United States since 2000. They also reached three gold medal bouts, more than any team since 1988.

Although they finished with three silvers, it was impossible to fault the efforts of Davis, Torrez and featherweight Duke Ragan against three elite opponents. International amateur success is a process that takes years, and Walsh's teams rarely get more than a few tournaments together before their top talents turn pro and it all starts over again.

Tyrell Biggs and Riddick Bowe are the only other Americans to win medals at super heavyweight.

Gane overcomes Lewis for interim title at UFC 265

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Ciryil Gane stopped Derrick Lewis with a flurry of ground-and-pound strikes in the third round at UFC 265 on Saturday night, winning an interim UFC heavyweight title and the next shot at champion Francis Ngannou.

Just over three years after Gane (10-0) made his mixed martial arts debut, the Frenchman dominated the championship bout at the Toyota Center in Lewis' hometown.

Gane was booed vociferously from the moment he stepped onto the arena floor, but he largely avoided every strike thrown by the slower, more deliberate Lewis before hurting the veteran repeatedly in the third round. Lewis eventually collapsed in pain with his back to Gane, who finished him on the ground with head strikes.

Phils top Mets for 7th straight victory

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Brad Miller homered twice and the first-place Philadelphia Phillies withstood a ninth-inning rally for their seventh straight victory, beating the New York Mets 5-3 Saturday.

Odubel Herrera hit a three-run homer and doubled to help the Phillies increase their NL East lead over New York to 1½ games.

"It's been fantastic and it's come from so many different places," manager Joe Girardi said. "It takes a lot of people and they're stepping up."

The Mets have lost six of seven and eight of 10. They had just two hits before Michael Conforto, Jonathan Villar and James McCann started the ninth with three consecutive homers to match a club record. Two more batters reached base before Ian Kennedy struck out Pete Alonso and J.D. Davis for his 18th save and second with the Phillies.

A double by pitcher Tylor Megill (1-2) and an infield single by Javier Báez were the only Mets hits through eight innings. J.D. Hammer (1-0) was the winner.

"You can't keep saying, 'We'll get them tomorrow,'" McCann said. "Because then you look up in September and it's too late. But there's a difference between a sense of urgency and panic. We can't get caught up in the negativity. We have to stay within ourselves and don't listen to the outside noise."

Yankees 5, Mariners 4: DJ LeMahieu and Kyle Higashioka made savvy baserunning moves, turning a double-play grounder into the go-ahead run, and host New York beat Seattle for its fifth straight victory.

Aaron Judge and Rougned Odor homered and the Yankees capitalized on a three-base

error by right fielder Mitch Haniger to win for the 10th time in 12 games.

New York erased a 4-1 deficit by scoring four times in the sixth inning. The Yankees have won the first three in a four-game series against the Mariners in a matchup of teams in the playoff chase. Seattle fell to 3-6 on a 10-game trip and each loss has been decided by no more than two runs.

Blue Jays 1-1, Red Sox 0-2: Jonathan Araúz singled home the tiebreaking run in the eighth inning and Boston won at Toronto to split a doubleheader.

Matt Barnes (6-3) worked one inning for the victory Adam Ottavino finished for his eighth save. The Red Sox won for the second time in their past 10 games.

The Blue Jays won the opener when Marcus Semien led off the bottom of the seventh by connecting on the first pitch from Barnes (5-3). It was Semien's 26th home run of the season and the first game-ending homer of his career.

Giants 9, Brewers 6 (11): Brandon Belt hit his second homer of the night during a four-run outburst in the 11th and San Francisco won at Milwaukee in a wild game between division leaders.

Each team scored three runs in the 10th inning — with Luis Urías and Willy Adames homering for the Brewers — after the Giants tied it on two-out triple in the ninth.

Dodgers 5, Angels 3: Chris Taylor broke an eighth-inning tie with a two-run double and the host Dodgers rallied to beat the Angels.

The Dodgers trailed 3-2 in the seventh before Cody Bellinger homered off Angels starter Jaime Barria.

White Sox 4, Cubs 0: Carlos Rodón struck out 11 in five stellar innings, Cesar

Hernandez and José Abreu hit back-to-back home runs and the White Sox beat the Cubs.

Athletics 12, Rangers 3: Matt Olson matched his career high with four hits, including a two-run double as part of Oakland's seven-run third inning, Texas was saddled with its 13th consecutive road loss.

Astros 4, Twins 0: Yordan Alvarez hit the 50th home run of his career, rookie Luis Garcia pitched six scoreless innings and three relievers completed the four-hitter to help host Houston beat Minnesota.

Nationals 3, Braves 2: Riley Adams' two-run homer in the ninth gave Washington the lead and the visiting Nationals rallied with three runs off Atlanta closer Will Smith.

Rays 12, Orioles 3: Brandon Lowe hit a grand slam, Nelson Cruz homered for the second straight game and Tampa Bay won at Baltimore.

Reds 11, Pirates 3: Jesse Winker went 3 for 5 with a homer, double and tied a career high with six RBIs in Cincinnati's victory over visiting Pittsburgh.

Padres 6, Diamondbacks 2: Manny Machado singled home the go-ahead run in a four-run eighth inning in host San Diego's victory over Arizona.

Cardinals 5, Royals 2: Nolan Arenado homered, pinch-hitter Matt Carpenter had a tiebreaking double and host St. Louis beat Kansas City.

Rockies 7, Marlins 4: Austin Gomber rebounded from his shortest start of the season to strike out a career-high nine, leading Colorado past visiting Miami.

Tigers 2, Indians 1: Miguel Cabrera remained two home runs shy of 500, but Tyler Alexander tossed a season-high 5½ scoreless innings to help Detroit win at Cleveland.

Bowden, who coached FSU to prominence, dies at 91

Associated Press

Bobby Bowden, the folksy Hall of Fame coach who built Florida State into an unprecedented college football dynasty, has died. He was 91.

Bobby's son, Terry, confirmed to The Associated Press that his father died at home in Tallahassee, Fla., surrounded by family early Sunday morning.

"It was truly peaceful," Terry Bowden said.

Bobby Bowden announced on July 21 he had a terminal illness that Terry Bowden later said was pancreatic cancer. Bobby Bowden had been treated for prostate cancer more than a decade ago.

"I've always tried to serve God's purpose for my life, on and off the field, and I am prepared for what is to come," Bowden, a devout Christian, said at the time. "My wife, Ann, and our family have been life's greatest

blessing. I am at peace."

Bowden was beloved by Seminole fans, respected by his peers and throughout his life one of the most accessible stars in college football. His home number was listed in the Tallahassee phone book for years.

With Southern charm and wit, Bowden piled up 377 wins during his 40 years as a major college coach, from tiny Samford — his alma mater, then known as Howard College — to West Vir-

ginia and finally at Florida State, where he went 315-98-4. The Seminoles were a force during his 34 seasons as coach, winning 12 Atlantic Coast Conference championships and national titles in 1993 and 1999.

Florida State had an unmatched run of 14 consecutive seasons (1987-2000) finishing ranked in the top five of The Associated Press college football poll under Bowden.