

US, Russia complete big prisoner swap

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States and Russia completed their biggest prisoner swap in post-Soviet history on Thursday, with Moscow releasing journalist Evan Gershkovich and fellow American Paul Whelan, along with dissidents including Vladimir Kara-Murza, in a multinational deal that set two dozen people free, the White House said.

Astonishing in scope, the trade followed years of secretive back-channel negotiations despite relations between Washington and Moscow being at their lowest point since the Cold War after Russian President Vladimir Putin's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

The deal was the latest in a series of prisoner swaps negotiated between Russia and the U.S. in the past two years but the first to require significant concessions from other countries, with seven nations agreeing to give up 24 prisoners. It was trumpeted as a "diplomatic feat" by President Joe Biden, who called the news an "incredible relief"

and said the detainees' "brutal ordeal was over."

But the welcome news was still sure to spark concerns over the imbalance of the deal — with Russia freeing journalists, dissidents and others convicted in a highly politicized court system in exchange for people the West regards as rightfully charged — and whether it gives foreign actors seeking leverage over the U.S. an incentive to take prisoners.

Under the deal, Russia released Gershkovich, a reporter for The Wall Street Journal who was jailed in 2023 and convicted in July of espionage charges that he and the U.S. vehemently denied and called baseless; Whelan, a Michigan corporate security executive jailed since 2018, also on espionage charges he and Washington have denied; and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist Alsu Kurmasheva, a dual U.S.-Russian citizen convicted in July of spreading false information about the Russian military, accusations her family and employer have rejected.

In addition to Kara-Murza, a Kremlin critic and Pulitzer Prize-winning writer serving 25 years on charges of treason widely seen as politically motivated, the Russians released included Oleg Orlov, co-chairman of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning human rights group Memorial, and associates of the late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Five German citizens also were released, including a German national held in Belarus.

The Russian side got Vadim Krasikov, who was convicted in Germany in 2021 of killing a former Chechen rebel in a Berlin park two years earlier, apparently on the orders of Moscow's security services.

Russia also received two alleged sleeper agents who were jailed in Slovenia, as well as three men charged by federal authorities in the U.S., including Roman Seleznev, a convicted computer hacker, and Vadim Konoshchenok, a suspected Russian intelligence operative accused of providing American-made electronics and ammunition to the Russian military.

Report: Osprey crash due to cracks in a gear, pilot decision

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A deadly Osprey aircraft crash last November off Japan was caused by cracks in a metal gear and the pilot's decision to keep flying, instead of heeding multiple warnings that he should land, according to an Air Force investigation released Thursday.

The CV-22B Osprey crash killed eight Air Force Special Operations Command service members and led to a monthslong military-wide grounding of the fleet. It's among four fatal Osprey crashes in the last two years driving investigations into the Osprey's safety record. It's created a split among the services about the future role of the unique aircraft, which can fly like an airplane but land like a helicopter.

For months, the Air Force would only say an unprecedented component failure caused the crash. On Thursday, it identified that a toothed piece called a pinion gear — a critical part of the proprotor gearbox — was to blame. The proprotor gearbox serves as the aircraft's transmission: Inside each

gearbox, five pinion gears spin hard to transmit the engine's power to turn the Osprey's masts and rotor blades.

While the Air Force is confident it was the pinion gear that failed, it still doesn't know why. But Pentagon leadership in charge of the V-22 Ospreys knew that "total loss of aircraft and crew were possible" should those proprotor gearbox components fail, lead investigator Lt. Gen. Michael Conley told reporters Wednesday in a call ahead of the report's release. In a rare move, the investigation also faulted that office, saying it did not share safety data that could have educated crews on the severity of the risk.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Conley said he believed it was the pilot's instinct to complete the military exercise that drove his decisions.

"To a degree, it's a way of life here. I mean, we want people in this command that that are biased towards 'yes,' biased towards getting the mission done," Conley said. "As we went through the investigation, I saw someone that was confident in the air-

craft but not cocky."

On the day of the crash, the Osprey was flying along the coast of mainland Japan headed to Okinawa when the first indications of trouble began.

In aircraft, vibrations are monitored as signs of potential trouble. A data recorder noted vibrations on the left side of the driveshaft that links the two engines and acts as a fail safe in case one engine loses power.

A second vibration followed.

But pilot Maj. Jeff Hoernemann and his crew never knew about the vibrations, because that data can only be downloaded at the end of a flight.

The accident killed Maj. Eric V. Spendlove, 36, of St. George, Utah; Maj. Luke A. Unrath, 34, of Riverside, Calif.; Capt. Terrell K. Brayman, 32, of Pittsford, N.Y.; Tech. Sgt. Zachary E. Lavoy, 33, of Oviedo, Fla.; Staff Sgt. Jake M. Turnage, 25, of Kennewick, Wash.; Senior Airman Brian K. Johnson, 32, of Reynoldsburg, Ohio; Staff Sgt. Jacob M. Galliher, 24, of Pittsfield, Mass.; and Hoernemann, 32, of Andover, Minn.

USS Florida returns from Pacific mission

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

The USS Florida, an East Coast-based submarine, returned to the United States on Wednesday following a rare deployment in the Pacific.

"We operate undetected anywhere," said Capt. Peter French, one of two commanding officers of the submarine. "The biggest takeaway from this is the versatility to go to multiple theaters of operation and be able to operate successfully."

The submarine's homecoming at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay in Georgia culminated a more than 700-day deployment during which it circumnavigated the globe.

An East Coast submarine operating in the Pacific, Navy leaders said, is unprecedented.

Aside from the Pacific, the warship operated in the Navy's 5th and 6th Fleets, which encompasses the waters of Europe, Africa and the Middle East, sailing more than 60,000 nautical miles.

The Florida is one of four Ohio-class, guided-missile submarines capable of carrying 154 precision Tomahawk missiles that have a range of 1,000 nautical miles.

The Florida was manned by two teams — a blue crew and a gold crew — which alternated running the ship every five months, leaders said.

Two crews, consisting of 15 officers and 150 enlisted sailors, are used to keep the submarine staffed at all times. One crew, typically the blue, will sail the submarine into a region, and the other crew conducts maintenance on the ship while it is in port.

Navy leaders were unable to provide specific deployment

details, only saying the crew operated or trained to the full breadth of the submarine's mission set, including anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, and surveillance and reconnaissance.

"I can tell you from the operations we did out there, we developed lots of lessons learned and passed on several very long messages detailing all the things that we learned from what we did," French said.

A spokesperson for Submarine Group 10, which oversees the Florida, said the submarine most recently supported the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower during an extended deployment to the Middle East and transited to Guam for a scheduled reloading of Tomahawk missiles.

Submarine movements are typically closely guarded secrets, but the Pentagon on rare occasions has highlighted a submarine's presence as a deterrent to enemies.

In April 2023, the Navy announced the Florida's arrival in the Middle East in a show of force as Iran-backed militant attacks on U.S. forces escalated.

Later that year, in September, the Florida became the first-ever guided missile submarine to visit Norway.

Rear Adm. Stephen Mack, director of maritime operations for U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, said the visit was a "visible demonstration of the strength of the U.S.-Norway partnership."

Navy leaders said the submarine also worked with special forces to practice coordinated missions. The Florida is capable of hosting 66 special operations forces onboard and is equipped with a dry deck shelter.

Parents of toddler abused at Navy day care to file suit

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The parents of a toddler who was physically abused by employees at a Navy child care center in Hawaii intend to file a lawsuit in federal court alleging the service was negligent.

Attorneys for Jeremy and Kaitlin Kuykendall, whose 15-month-old daughter Bella was abused in 2022 at the Ford Island Child Development Center, filed a pre-litigation SF-95 claim on Wednesday, according to a news release by Just Well Law, the Austin, Texas-based firm representing the family.

Filing the claim is the first step in seeking compensation under the Federal Tort Claims Act in federal court.

Two center employees were convicted in Hawaii District Court of misdemeanor assault in the case and handed jail terms in January.

Video footage from August

2022 revealed that employees pinched, slapped, squeezed, shook and smothered the toddler, according to the SF-95 claim. At times, the employees made the girl punch herself.

The SF-95 claim alleges the Navy was negligent in its oversight of the day care facility.

"The necessary background checks were either inadequately performed or completely overlooked, allowing individuals unfit for childcare responsibilities to be employed at the facility," the claim states. "At least one employee and potentially more were hired without the completion of necessary background checks."

The Navy did not respond to a request for comment.

The Pentagon's inspector general announced in May that investigators would evaluate how the Defense Department and military services respond to child abuse allegations at its day care facilities.

Navy base at Souda Bay receives new commander

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

A Navy pilot with over 2,000 flight hours and experience managing a helicopter squadron in the Indo-Pacific assumed command Thursday of Naval Support Activity Souda Bay on the Greek Island of Crete.

Capt. Stephen Steacy relieved Capt. Odin Klug, who had led the base since July 2022, NSA Souda Bay said in a statement Thursday. Rear Adm. Brad Collins, commanding officer of Navy Region Europe, Africa, Central, presided over the change-of-command ceremony.

In taking command, Steacy acknowledged the base's in-

creasingly vital role in the service's operations in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

Small but strategically situated, NSA Souda Bay provides support for Navy operations, including port services. It is the homeport for the expeditionary sea base USS Hershel "Woody" Williams.

"Our location is key to the Navy's ability to respond swiftly and effectively to nearby crises," the California native and George Washington University graduate said during the ceremony.

Klug's next assignment is at Navy Installations Command headquarters in Washington.

Mohammed to plead guilty in 9/11 attacks

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, accused as the mastermind of al-Qaida's Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, has agreed to plead guilty, the Defense Department said Wednesday. The development points to a long-delayed resolution in an attack that killed thousands and altered the course of the United States and much of the Middle East.

Mohammed and two accomplices, Walid bin Attash and Mustafa al-Hawsawi, are expected to enter the pleas at the military commission at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, as soon as next week.

Defense lawyers have requested the men receive life sentences in exchange for the guilty pleas, according to letters from the federal government received by relatives of some of

the nearly 3,000 people killed outright on the morning of Sept. 11.

Terry Strada, the head of one group of families of direct victims of the 9/11 attacks, invoked the many relatives who have died while awaiting justice for the killings when she heard news of the plea agreement.

"They were cowards when they planned the attack," she said of the defendants. "And they're cowards today."

Pentagon officials declined to immediately release the full terms of the plea bargains.

The U.S. agreement with the men comes more than 16 years after their prosecution began for al-Qaida's attack. It comes more than 20 years after militants commandeered four commercial airliners to use as fuel-filled missiles, flying three of them into the World Trade Cen-

ter in New York and the Pentagon.

Al-Qaida hijackers headed the fourth plane to Washington. But crew members and passengers tried to storm the cockpit, and the plane crashed into a Pennsylvania field.

The attack triggered what President George W. Bush's administration called its war on terror, prompting the U.S. military invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and years of U.S. operations against armed extremist groups elsewhere in the Middle East.

The attack and U.S. retaliation brought the overthrow of two governments outright, devastated communities and countries caught in the battle, and played a role in inspiring the 2011 Arab Spring popular uprisings against authoritarian Middle East governments.

U.S. authorities point to Mohammed as the source of the idea to use planes as weapons. He allegedly received approval from al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden to craft what became the 9/11 hijackings and killings. U.S. forces killed bin Laden in 2011.

Authorities captured Mohammed in 2003. Mohammed was subjected to waterboarding 183 times while in CIA custody before coming to Guantanamo, along with other torture and coercive questioning.

The use of torture has proven one of the most formidable obstacles in U.S. efforts to try the men in the military commission at Guantanamo, owing to the inadmissibility of evidence linked to abuse. Torture has accounted for much of the delay of the proceedings, along with the courtroom's location a plane ride away from the United States.

Trump claims that Harris misled voters on her race

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Donald Trump falsely suggested Kamala Harris had misled voters about her race as the former president appeared Wednesday before the National Association of Black Journalists in Chicago in an interview that quickly turned hostile.

The Republican former president wrongly claimed that Harris, the first Black woman and Asian American to serve as vice president, had in the past only promoted her Indian heritage.

"I didn't know she was Black until a number of years ago when she happened to turn Black and now she wants to be known as Black. So, I don't know, is she Indian or is she Black?" Trump said while addressing the group's annual convention.

Harris is the daughter of a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, both immigrants to the U.S. As an undergraduate, Harris

attended Howard University, one of the nation's most prominent historically Black colleges and universities, where she also pledged the historically Black sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha. As a U.S. senator, Harris was a member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Trump has leveled criticism at Harris since she replaced President Joe Biden atop the likely Democratic ticket last week. Throughout his political career, Trump has repeatedly questioned the backgrounds of opponents who are racial minorities.

Michael Tyler, the communications director for Harris' campaign, said in a statement that "the hostility Donald Trump showed on stage today is the same hostility he has shown throughout his life, throughout his term in office, and throughout his campaign for president as he seeks to regain power."

Schumer touts his bill to reverse immunity ruling

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., planned to introduce legislation Thursday reaffirming that presidents do not have immunity for criminal actions, an attempt to reverse the Supreme Court's landmark decision last month.

Schumer's No Kings Act would attempt to invalidate the decision by declaring that presidents are not immune from criminal law and clarifying that Congress, not the court, determines to whom federal criminal law is applied.

The court's conservative majority decided July 1 that presidents have broad immunity from criminal prosecution for actions taken within their official duties—a decision that threw into doubt the Justice Department's case against Republican former President Donald Trump for his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss.

Schumer said that Congress

has an obligation and the constitutional authority to check the Supreme Court on its decision.

The Senate bill, which has more than two dozen Democratic cosponsors, comes after Democratic President Joe Biden called on lawmakers earlier this week to ratify a constitutional amendment limiting presidential immunity, along with establishing term limits and an enforceable ethics code for the court's nine justices.

The Supreme Court's immunity decision stunned Washington and drew a sharp dissent from the court's liberal justices warning of the perils to democracy, particularly as Trump seeks a return to the White House.

Trump celebrated the decision as a "BIG WIN" on his social media platform, and Republicans in Congress rallied around him. Without GOP support, Schumer's bill has little chance of passing in the narrowly divided chamber.

Israel: Head of Hamas' military wing killed

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military said Thursday that it has confirmed that the head of Hamas' military wing, Mohammed Deif, was killed in an airstrike in Gaza in July. The announcement came a day after an apparent Israeli strike in the Iranian capital killed Hamas' top political leader.

The rapid events this week have left U.S., Egyptian and Qatari mediators scrambling to salvage talks for a cease-fire deal in Gaza. At the same time, international diplomats tried to avert an escalation into all-out regional war after the assassination in Tehran of Hamas' Ismail Haniyeh, Israel's killing of a top

Hezbollah commander in a Beirut strike and — now — Israel's announcement of Deif's death.

There was no immediate comment on the Israeli claim by Hamas, which had previously said Deif survived the July strike in Gaza. A member of Hamas' political bureau, Izzat al-Risheq, said in a statement Thursday that confirming or denying his death is the responsibility of the group's military wing, known as the Qassam Brigades, which so far has been silent.

The elimination of Haniyeh and Deif — two of Hamas' most senior figures — brings a victory for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It also

puts him at a crossroads.

It potentially presents him with a political off-ramp to end the war, allowing him to retreat from his lofty promises of "total victory" while showing Israelis that Hamas' military capabilities suffered a debilitating blow.

It could also lead him to harden Israel's position in cease-fire talks, with Israeli officials insisting the blows to Hamas will force it to compromise. Hamas too could dig in as well in the talks — or quit them entirely.

Israel believes that Deif, the head of Hamas' military, and Yahya Sinwar, the top Hamas leader in Gaza, were the chief architects of the Oct. 7 attack that killed some 1,200 people in

southern Israel and triggered the Israel-Hamas war. Sinwar is believed to remain in hiding in Gaza.

Israel targeted Deif in a July 13 strike that hit a compound on the outskirts of the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis. The military said at the time that another Hamas commander, Rafa Salama, was killed. More than 90 other people, including displaced civilians in nearby tents, were killed in the strike, Gaza health officials said at the time.

In a statement Thursday, the Israeli military said that "following an intelligence assessment, it can be confirmed that Mohammed Deif was eliminated in the strike."

Name of teen suspect in UK stabbings is released

Associated Press

LONDON — The 17-year-old boy charged with murder in the deaths of three girls and stabbing 10 other people in a dance class was named in court Thursday partly to counter misinformation about his identity that has been blamed for triggering violent protests across England.

Judge Andrew Menary said his decision to allow Axel Rudakubana to be named was exceptional given the boy's age. But he said the teen will lose his right to anonymity when he turns 18 next week and contin-

uing to shield his identity could allow rumors about him to metastasize.

"Continuing to prevent the full reporting has the disadvantage of allowing others to spread misinformation, in a vacuum," Menary said in Liverpool Crown Court.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer summoned British police chiefs to address the crisis Thursday after officers in several cities have been pelted with bottles and rocks during two nights of violent clashes.

The attack Monday on children at a Taylor Swift-themed

summer holiday dance class shocked a country where knife crime is a long-standing and vexing problem, though mass stabbings are rare. The deaths have been used by far-right activists to stoke anger at immigrants and Muslims — though the suspect is not an immigrant, and his religion has not been disclosed.

Rudakubana, who police said was born in Wales, has not been charged with terrorism offenses but faces three counts of murder in the deaths of Alice Dasilva Aguiar, 9, Elsie Dot Stancombe, 7, and Bebe King,

6, in the town of Southport in northwest England.

He also has been charged with 10 counts of attempted murder for the eight children and two adults who were injured. Rudakubana did not enter a plea and was ordered held without bail and returned to youth detention.

The adults, who were listed in critical condition, were named for the first time as Leanne Lucas, who led the dance and yoga class, and John Hayes, who worked nearby and intervened in the attack to protect children.

Vermont gets flood warnings respite as aid is sought

Associated Press

LYNDON, Vt. — Vermont residents awakened Thursday to a quieter weather forecast with no flood warnings following another round of destructive storms, as a U.S. senator from the state asked Congress to pass a disaster aid package that would help communities across the country dealing with wildfires, floods,

hurricanes and tornadoes.

There were downpours Wednesday night in parts of Vermont and New Hampshire. St. Johnsbury, Vt., which got more than 8 inches of rain on Tuesday, saw less than an inch of rain Wednesday, the National Weather Service said.

Vermont Gov. Phil Scott said at a news conference Wednes-

day that the latest storms to hit the state have undone much of the cleanup and recovery work from its last major bout of flooding only weeks ago, and he called on residents to "stick together."

State officials said preliminary information indicated that 50 homes were destroyed or suffered significant damage. More

than half a dozen roads were closed, a lightning strike knocked out water for part of the town of St. Johnsbury, and flooding had contaminated several wells that serve the village of Lyndonville.

In Washington, Democratic U.S. Sen. Peter Welch asked Congress to pass a supplemental disaster aid package.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Backyard coop owners use chickens in protest

IA DES MOINES — Residents with backyard coops in Iowa's capital city paraded with some of their chickens Monday from the Iowa Statehouse to City Hall after local officials ruffled their feathers by proposing stricter limits on raising birds in residential neighborhoods.

Ed and Mary Byrnes Fallon, the operators of an urban farm in Des Moines, hatched the protest after the City Council unveiled the proposal last month to limit fowl play — and potential noise, smell and mess. The proposal would cut the number of birds allowed from 30 to 12 but also ban roosters.

Video posted online by WOI-TV showed several people in a small group of poultry enthusiasts holding chickens before walking the three-quarters of a mile from the Statehouse to City Hall. One boy wore a chicken hat.

The city has said the proposal is a response to other residents crying foul. Council member Linda Westergaard told WOI-TV last week that the birds are disturbing people's peace and quiet.

City's police fleet now all Teslas, first in nation

CA SOUTH PASADENA — A city in Southern California has become the first in the nation to replace its police patrol cars with electric vehicles, officials announced Monday, unveiling a fleet of 20 new Teslas.

South Pasadena on the edge

of Los Angeles will replace its gas-guzzling police cruisers with the Teslas to help protect public health and fight climate change through reducing emissions. The Teslas will use new electric vehicle chargers installed at City Hall, officials said.

Police vehicles typically idle more than other vehicles when officers make traffic stops or respond to emergency calls, which greatly adds to emissions, said Michael Cacciotti, a city councilmember and regional air quality official.

Other cities have some electric vehicles in their fleets but this is the first to entirely go electric, officials said.

The switch to electric is expected to save South Pasadena about \$4,000 annually per vehicle on energy costs, and generate savings on maintenance such as brakes, oil changes and air filters, officials said.

Ex-ballerina convicted of manslaughter

FL BRADENTON — A former ballerina has been convicted of manslaughter in the 2020 shooting death of her estranged husband in Florida.

A Manatee County jury returned the guilty verdict late Tuesday against Ashley Benefield, court records show. She had been charged with second-degree murder, but the jurors opted for a lesser offense after nearly seven hours of deliberations.

Benefield, 32, claimed that she killed her then-58-year-old estranged husband, Doug Benefield, during a September 2020 argument at her mother's home, where she had moved from South Carolina after leaving

him. Authorities say she shot him twice.

She now faces up to 30 years in prison because she used a firearm in the killing.

State's ban on AR-15s deemed unconstitutional

NJ TRENTON — New Jersey's ban on the AR-15 rifle is unconstitutional, but the state's cap on magazines over 10 rounds passes constitutional muster, a federal judge said Tuesday.

U.S. District Judge Peter Sheridan's 69-page opinion says he was compelled to rule as he did because of the Supreme Court's rulings in firearms cases, particularly the 2022 Bruen decision that expanded gun rights.

Sheridan's ruling left both Second Amendment advocates and the state attorney general planning appeals. The judge temporarily delayed the order for 30 days.

Pointing to the high court's precedents, Sheridan suggested Congress and the president could do more to curb gun-related violence nationwide.

Referendum might not use the word 'abortion'

NY ALBANY — A proposed amendment to New York's Constitution that's intended to protect abortion rights might appear on the ballot this fall without any mention of the word "abortion."

That's partly because of sharp disagreements about what the so-called Equal Rights Amendment would actually do, if passed.

The state's Board of Elec-

tions, which is charged with writing easy-to-understand explanations of proposed laws appearing on the ballot, decided Monday that rather than try and interpret the amendment, they would simply repeat its somewhat unclear language in material given to voters.

New York's Constitution currently says that no person shall be subjected to discrimination based on race, color, creed or religion. The proposed amendment would add to that list: ethnicity, national origin, age, disability and "sex, including sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, pregnancy outcomes, and reproductive health care and autonomy."

Man threatened to shoot over bill to arm teachers

WI MADISON — A Wisconsin man was convicted and sentenced to time served Monday for threatening to shoot state lawmakers in 2022 if they passed a bill allowing teachers to carry firearms.

James Stearns, of Fond du Lac, was found guilty of making terrorist threats, a felony, by Judge Anthony Nehls and sentenced to seven days in jail, which he had already served, and fined \$500.

The 75-year-old Stearns sent two emails in May 2022 threatening to shoot state legislators if they passed a bill allowing for teachers to be armed, according to the criminal complaint. The possibility of arming teachers was discussed by Republican lawmakers days after 19 elementary school students and two teachers were killed in Uvalde, Texas.

— From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Richardson, Lyles hit track seeking gold

Associated Press

There are big races, and then there are the Olympics.

When Sha'Carri Richardson, Noah Lyles and all the other fastest runners and best jumpers and throwers of 2024 line up for the Olympic track and field meet, little of what they've done on the road to Paris will mean much. What will matter is how they respond to pressure when the spotlight is on.

Will they end up shining as brightly as Usain Bolt or Carl Lewis, whose knack for performing when Olympic gold medals were at stake turned them into larger-than-life icons?

Or will they be more like Jamaican sprinter Shericka Jackson and American hurdler Grant Holloway, among the best performers of their generation but still looking to parlay all that talent into a spot at the top of the Olympic podium?

"Right now, I do not hold a gold medal in the Olympics," said Lyles, who counts the

bronze medal he won in the 200 meters at the Tokyo Games among his biggest disappointments. "I have multiple world championships, and national championships, as well. The only one that's missing from the list is an Olympic gold. And I'm planning on leaving with a lot of those."

The dramas involving Richardson, Lyles and everyone else will play out in 48 events spread over 10 days, with most of the action taking place at the Stade de France, starting Aug. 2. As an added bonus, there will be a bonus: a first-of-its-kind \$50,000 payout to all 48 gold medalists, courtesy of World Athletics, the organization that runs global track.

The nearly 2,200 athletes competing in the Olympics' biggest sport are well aware that the money is great, but the gold medal brings an air of immortality that only an Olympic title can.

"The moment only comes once every four years," Holloway said. "If you're not train-

ing to be an Olympic gold medalist, then what the hell are you doing? That's my mentality."

Lyles goes for sprint double

Lyles attributes a lot of his bad finish in 2021 to depression that kept him from focusing. That race is the only 200-meter sprint he's lost at a major championship.

By the time the 200 final comes around on Aug. 8, the 100 will be in the rearview mirror and we'll know if Lyles has a chance to complete a sprint double, a la Bolt, and Lewis before him. Lyles is the reigning world champ at 100, but he's less seasoned at that distance.

Just last month, another Jamaican, Kishane Thompson, ran 9.77 to head into his first Olympics with the world's best time. Also, Jamaica's Oblique Seville beat Lyles head-to-head at a meet in Kingston in June. But a tune-up in Kingston and the Olympics in Paris are two different animals.

Army wrestler aims to capitalize on late inclusion

BY MATT WAGNER

Stars and Stripes

Most people would be inconsolable after missing out on an Olympic berth.

Yet Spc. Kamal Bey didn't worry too much after dropping an Olympic playoff match at 77 kilograms during the United World Wrestling Olympic Qualifiers in Istanbul on May 9-12.

Bey, 26, had powered his way through the consolation bracket to set up the matchup against Hungary's Zoltan Levai for the last Olympic spot.

After losing that match 3-0, the culinary specialist in the Army's World Class Athlete Program just waited for potential good news. And he received it on June 27 after an Individual Neutral Athlete, or an athlete who has a Russian or Belarusian passport and has qualified for the Paris Games, didn't accept the berth.

"I knew I was right there, so I knew if someone ended up either failing a drug test or someone was ineligible, then I would

be the next athlete," Bey said. "The emotions I felt once I got the spot were excitement, relief and immediately focused because now we have to get after it."

Despite the late addition, both Bey and assistant wrestling coach Spenser Mango expressed the belief he can compete for gold Aug. 6-7 at Champ-de-Mars Arena in Paris. Bey currently is ranked 13th in the world according to UWW, and he is the U.S. Olympic trials champion.

His record this year on the world circuit hasn't been stellar. Bey is 6-4 in three tournaments with a third-place finish at the Seniors Pan-American Championships on Feb. 21-24 in Acapulco, Mexico, and a fourth-place finish in Istanbul.

It's a far cry from Bey's 2023 campaign, when he went 14-4 and won both the Pan-American Championships in Las Vegas and the Pan-American Games in Santiago, Chile.

Bey also is a six-time U.S. Open champion.

"He's a generational talent," Mango said of Bey. "He can do things that other people can't. He's one heck of an athlete, and I'm excited to see how the Olympics pan out."

"I believe Kamal Bey, when he wrestles at his best, can beat anybody in that bracket."

Bey's already proven himself capable of defeating one of the top wrestlers in his bracket. During the 2023 Pan-American Games, the American took down Cuban Yosvanys Pena Flores, currently No. 5 in the weight class, twice — the first a 2-1 decision at the Senior Pan-American Championships and then a 4-3 victory at the Pan-American Games.

He started to wrestle at the age of 3, eventually entered the junior world circuit and won a junior world crown in 2018.

Bey joined the Army in May 2021 and entered the WCAP. Under the tutelage of Mango and others, Bey said he noticed the difference in his results immediately.

"I already was sort of a big

name before I got into the program in Greco-Roman wrestling, but to be competitive and be consistent, my consistency wasn't the same," Bey said. "I had the explosiveness, I had the strength, I had the athletic ability, but they definitely honed me into a fine-edge sword."

Bey said his defense when he's in the down position is one of his strengths. He also highlighted an ability to complete lifts when he's on top.

While he anticipates a good reception from Team USA fans, he also mentioned his pride in being an Olympian feels even greater because of the backing of the Army.

And it would make a medal feel even sweeter.

"It's great having one, the support of the nation, but it's really cool having the support of the Armed Forces, the U.S. Army," Bey said. "The Army's been nothing but great to me, so the fact that I get to represent them and potentially go out there and win a medal, it would mean the world to me."

Maddalena leads 50m rifle qualification

By MATT WAGNER
Stars and Stripes

CHATEAUROUX, France — Army Sgt. Sagen Maddalena entered the Chateauroux Shooting Centre on Thursday morning not feeling that confident.

While training for the women's 50-meter rifle three-position the day before, her results didn't meet her standards. She hoped it wasn't foreshadowing for Thursday afternoon's qualification round.

To remove that from her mind, Maddalena found a corner, paced a bit and tried to clear her head.

"I wasn't getting discouraged about it, but it was a little something in my head, a little bit of doubt," Maddalena said. "I was able to put that aside, and this morning even though I wasn't sure, I knew my job I had to do."

The 30-year-old sharpshooter not only advanced to Friday morning's final — she headed the field of 32 shooters. Mad-

dalena scored 593 points out of a possible 600, and the University of Alaska Fairbanks alumna also amassed the highest bull's-eye total of 45.

That gave Maddalena the edge over China's Qiongyue Zhang, who finished with the same points but had 40 bull's-eyes.

Because rule changes that included the number of shots and the weapons used in the event wiped the Olympic record book clean this year, Maddalena established a new Olympic qualifying record.

"It's a big success, I'm proud of it, but the work's not done," Maddalena said.

She finished the kneeling position with 198 points and 17 bull's-eyes, putting her in third place after 20 shots.

Then the 5-foot-4 Groveland, Calif., native composed a perfect series in the prone position with 200. Maddalena mowed through her shots at a rapid pace and strung together 13 consecutive bull's-eyes before

one shot missed the dead center ring of the target.

Maddalena found herself in first place at that point, and everyone seemed to notice, as photographers present turned their lenses toward the American.

The standing position proved troublesome — at least in relation to the other two. She posted 195 points over the 20 shots.

Only four competitors — Switzerland's Chiara Leone, who placed third overall; Mongolia's Yesugen Oyunbat (fourth); Poland's Natalia Kochanska (sixth) and Denmark's Rikke Maeng Ibsen (14th) — eclipsed Maddalena's standing total.

The shooters dealt with windy conditions throughout the round. Gusts sometimes silenced the range as competitors adjusted or waited for stillness.

Maddalena downplayed the elements, saying worse conditions exist.

"OK, it was windy, but it was consistent. So it was readable," Maddalena said. "The gusts came through but they didn't push the body, and that's a big thing. So, I was able to maintain control of myself and all I had to do was stay patient about when to take the shot, when to wait, when to take another hold."

So Maddalena and seven others turn their attentions to Friday's final.

For her, it's a chance to make her first Olympic podium after finishing fifth in the Tokyo Games in the event and fourth Monday in the 10-meter air rifle final in Paris.

She has USA Shooting's best chance so far to end its medal drought at the Paris Olympics.

She said she's focusing on the controllables.

"It's a clean slate tomorrow. Everyone starts from zero," Maddalena said. "Tomorrow is just going to be what I can control, taking ahold of that and riding the high."

US tops South Sudan to reach men's hoops quarterfinals

Associated Press

VILLENEUVE-D'ASCQ, France — In the rematch, the United States had an easier time with South Sudan than it did when the teams met a couple of weeks ago.

Easier. Not easy.

The U.S. clinched a trip to the quarterfinals at the Paris Olympics by beating South Sudan 103-86 on Wednesday night — a game that wasn't ever really in doubt but was no romp either. Bam Adebayo scored 18 points and Kevin Durant had 14 for the Americans, who took control with a 25-4 run in the first half.

The U.S. reserves, led by Adebayo, scored 66 points.

"We've been calling ourselves the bench mob for a long time now," Adebayo said. "And it doesn't matter who's in the lineup. We always seem to figure it out."

Anthony Edwards scored 13 and LeBron James added 12 for the U.S. Nuni Omot led South Sudan with 21 points, while Carlik Jones scored 18 and Bul Kuol added 16.

The win locked up a knockout-round berth and the No. 1 seed out of Group C for the U.S., which joined Canada, France and Germany in the quarterfinals. There are seven teams still alive for the other four quarterfinal spots; only Puerto Rico, which faces the Americans on Saturday, has been eliminated from contention to advance.

That said, Saturday's game — the first between Puerto Rico and the U.S. at the Olympics since an embarrassing 92-73 loss for the Americans in Athens 20 years ago — isn't meaningless for the U.S. A 3-0 record in group play would give the Americans their best chance at a top-two seed for the knockout round and, in theory, an easier matchup in the quarterfinals.

"It's not the goal," U.S. forward Anthony Davis said of making the quarterfinals. "It does give us a sense of satisfaction as far as being able to play next week. But there's a lot that we can get better at, a lot that we can clean up, and we'll use Saturday's game against Puerto Rico to tighten the screws

again and then just see where it takes us from there."

South Sudan finishes group play against Serbia on Saturday, a game that has knockout-stage implications for both teams. The draw for the quarterfinals will be held Saturday night, and all four quarterfinal games will be played Tuesday in Paris.

"We knew this wasn't going to be an easy task," Jones said. "Our spirits are still positive."

South Sudan coach Royal Ivey likened his life to a movie after his team won its Olympic opener over Puerto Rico, and understandably so. The story of his team — from the youngest country in the world, a group that overcame absurd odds just to get to the Paris Games — is a quintessential Olympic one, one that will be talked about for years whether the African nation wins another game in France or not.

"They're a talented team," U.S. guard Stephen Curry said. "On any given night, they can beat anybody."

Many stars stayed at MLB trade deadline

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Tarik Skubal, Blake Snell and Garrett Crochet all stayed put.

Similarly, so did baseball's most highly regarded prospects.

Whether it was stingy sellers or cautious buyers, the biggest potential trade targets weren't dealt before Tuesday's deadline. There were still plenty of moves, but they involved players with a bit less star power and prospects further down the food chain.

"It's hard to expect it to go any differently. You expand the playoffs, a whole host of things, and the deadline hasn't moved," Baltimore general manager Mike Elias said. "Maybe if they moved the deadline back 10 or 15 days or something like that, it could change things, but there's no talk of that happening yet. For the foreseeable future, you have more playoff teams, you have fewer teams that want to give up on the season."

The Tampa Bay Rays did trade All-Star infielder Isaac Paredes to the Chicago Cubs for third baseman Christopher Morel and a couple of minor leaguers, but Luis Robert Jr. of the White Sox and Vladimir Guerrero Jr. of the Blue Jays didn't go anywhere, and although plenty of relievers switched teams, they did not include Oakland stand-out Mason Miller.

Instead, a lot of deals resembled what Detroit and the Los Angeles Dodgers did. The

Tigers traded right-hander Jack Flaherty — who is having a nice season this year after a couple of uneven ones — and received minor league catcher Thayron Liranzo and infielder Trey Sweeney from the Dodgers. Sweeney becomes Detroit's 24th-best prospect, according to MLB Pipeline. Liranzo is ranked fifth for the Tigers but hasn't played above Class A.

None of Baseball America's top 100 prospects were traded.

Florida exodus

The Rays and Miami Marlins both shed a lot of talent. That was no surprise in Miami's case, but Tampa Bay remains above .500 and not too far out of a playoff spot.

In addition to Paredes, the Rays dealt away Amed Rosario, Zach Eflin and Randy Arozarena. Given their track record, you'll probably be hearing about some of the prospects Tampa Bay received at some point down the road.

Small ball

If any team had the ability to swing a trade for a potential ace like Skubal, it was Baltimore, with its wealth of young talent. But the Orioles held onto their top three prospects — infielders Jackson Holliday and Coby Mayo and catcher Samuel Basallo — and traded for Eflin and Miami lefty Trevor

Rogers instead. Baltimore also added a couple of relievers but ultimately steered clear of a real blockbuster deal.

Then the Orioles promoted Holliday back to the majors Wednesday.

Wheeling and dealing

San Diego general manager A.J. Preller was a busy man again. He traded a huge package of prospects for Juan Soto at the deadline in 2022, then he dealt Soto to the New York Yankees this past offseason — and traded for Dylan Cease soon after that.

The Padres recently went on a seven-game winning streak that put them in decent position for a wild card — with an outside chance at challenging the Dodgers atop the NL West. Now Jason Adam, Tanner Scott, Bryan Hoewing and Martín Pérez have been added to San Diego's pitching staff after a recent flurry of moves.

No sale

Although the number of teams still in playoff contention probably led to less selling, even some teams that are completely out of it were pretty quiet. The Chicago White Sox traded Erick Fedde and Tommy Pham but kept Crochet and Robert. Oakland still has Miller and Brent Rooker. Colorado didn't do anything all that drastic either.

Source: Cavs, Allen agree to 3-year, \$91M extension

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Cavaliers center Jarrett Allen has agreed to a three-year, \$91 million contract extension with Cleveland, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Allen, who has become indispensable for the Cavs as well as one of the Eastern Conference's top big men, will be guaranteed \$131 million over the next five seasons, said the person who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the deal has not been signed.

The Cavs hoped to announce Allen's extension as early as Thursday, the person said.

One of Allen's agents, Derrick Powell, gave details of the deal earlier to ESPN.

The affable Allen is part of Cleveland's "Core 4" of players along with All-Star guard Donovan Mitchell, guard Darius Garland and forward Evan Mobley.

The group helped Cleveland make the playoffs for the second year in a row and the Cavs advanced past the first round before losing to eventual champion Boston in the conference semifinals.

The 26-year-old Allen is the third key player to sign an extension with the Cavs this summer, following deals for Mitchell (3 years, \$150.3 million) and Mobley (5 years, \$224 million). The team also hired Kenny Atkinson as its new coach.

An All-Star in 2022, Allen averaged a career-high 16.5 points and 10.5 rebounds and 2.7 assists

in 77 games for Cleveland last season.

NFL moving closer to replacing chain gang

The NFL is moving closer to replacing the chain gang with new technology to measure line to gain.

NFL executive Gary Brantley told The Associated Press the league will test Sony's Hawk-Eye technology during some preseason games. The system most likely wouldn't be ready for full implementation until next season, though it could happen sooner.

Sony, which was named the NFL's official technology partner Wednesday, has expanded its sports technology through Hawk-Eye Innovations to support officiating and the development of

on-field and sideline technologies, including a new coach's sideline headset set to debut in 2025.

Its Hawk-Eye tracking services for line-to-gain measurement adds cameras to stadiums to track players, officials and the ball. The optimal tracking system notifies officials instantly if a first down was gained after the ball is spotted by hand.

The NFL has long used two bright orange sticks and a chain to measure for first downs. That method would remain in a backup capacity.

Beyond new technology for line-to-gain measurement and new headsets for coaches' communication, Sony is partnering with the NFL to enhance sideline photography, broadcast cameras and production, and more.