

US sending ships, fighter squadron to Mideast

BY MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Friday ordered additional warships, including destroyers and cruisers, and an additional fighter squadron to the Middle East to bolster defenses as the region braces for a potential attack from Iran in retaliation for the killing of a Hamas leader.

“To maintain a carrier strike group presence in the Middle East, the secretary has ordered the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group to replace the USS Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group currently on deployment in the [U.S.] Central Command area of responsibility,” Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said in a statement announcing the additional forces.

In addition to destroyers and cruisers, the Pentagon is also taking steps to increase its readiness to deploy additional land-based ballistic missile defenses. Austin also ordered the deployment of an additional fighter squadron to the region, Singh said.

The decision to move U.S. forces comes ahead of an anticipated Iranian attack in response to the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on Wednesday.

President Joe Biden on Thursday discussed U.S. efforts to support Israel’s defense against threats, including against ballistic missiles and drones, with Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the White House reported. The discussion included the possibility of “new defensive U.S. military deployments.”

Austin also spoke with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on Friday morning about possible changes to U.S. forces in the region.

“We’ve got to make sure we’ve got the right resources and capabilities in the region,” National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said earlier Friday during an interview with CNN.

Israel had pledged to kill Haniyeh and other Hamas leaders over the militant group’s Oct. 7 surprise attack on southern Israel that sparked the war in Gaza. The strike came just after Haniyeh had attended the inauguration of Iran’s new president in Tehran and hours after Israel targeted a top commander in Iran’s ally Hezbollah in the Lebanese capital of Beirut.

“We’ve heard the supreme

leader loud and clear that he intends to avenge this killing of a Hamas leader in Tehran and that they want to conduct another attack on Israel,” Kirby said.

The Pentagon announced in June that the USS Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group would deploy for a scheduled training exercise in the Indo-Pacific region before arriving in the Middle East. The Washington Post reported the Roosevelt was in the Persian Gulf on Wednesday with six U.S. destroyers — the USS Cole, the USS John S. McCain, the USS Daniel Inouye, the USS Russell, the USS Michael Murphy and the USS Laiboon.

The USS Wasp Amphibious Ready Group is in the Eastern Mediterranean on a regularly scheduled deployment.

US, allies prepare to defend Israel against Iran

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel is already in a “multi-front war” with Iran and its proxies, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a Cabinet meeting Sunday, as the United States and allies prepared to defend Israel from an expected counterstrike and prevent an even more destructive regional conflict.

Tensions have soared following nearly 10 months of war in Gaza and the killing last week of a senior Hezbollah commander in Lebanon and Hamas’ top political leader in Iran. Iran and its allies have blamed Israel and threatened retaliation. Hamas said it has begun discussions on choosing a new leader. Netanyahu said Israel was ready for any scenario. Jordan’s foreign minister was making a rare trip to Iran as part of diplomatic efforts, while the Pentagon has moved significant assets to the region.

“We are doing everything possible to make sure that this situation does not boil over,” White House deputy national secur-

ity adviser Jon Finer told ABC. In Israel, some prepared bomb shelters and recalled Iran’s unprecedented direct military assault in April following a suspected Israeli strike that killed two Iranian generals. Israel said almost all the drones and ballistic and cruise missiles were intercepted.

A stabbing attack Sunday near Tel Aviv killed a woman in her 70s and an 80-year-old man, according to Israel’s Magen David Adom rescue service and a nearby hospital, and two other men were wounded. The police said the attack was carried out by a Palestinian militant, who was “neutralized.”

Inside Gaza, Israel’s military said it struck Hamas command centers at two schools in Gaza City, Al-Nasr and Hassan Salamah. A doctor at al-Ahli Hospital, Fadel Naeem, told the AP they had received eight bodies while others were taken to Sheikh Radwan clinic.

Earlier, Israeli strikes killed at least 18 people. One hit a tent camp for thousands of displaced Palestinians in the courtyard of

Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, killing four people, including one woman, and injuring others, Gaza’s Health Ministry said.

An Associated Press journalist filmed men rushing to the scene to retrieve bodies while trying to extinguish the fire.

The Israeli military said it targeted a Palestinian militant in the strike, which it said caused secondary explosions, “indicating the presence of weaponry in the area.”

The hospital in Deir al-Balah is the main medical facility operating in central Gaza as many others in the territory no longer function. A separate strike on a home near Deir al-Balah killed a girl and her parents, according to the hospital.

Another strike flattened a house in northern Gaza, killing at least eight people, including three children, their parents and their grandmother, according to the Health Ministry. A further three people were killed in a strike on a vehicle in Gaza City, according to the Civil Defense first responders who operate under the Hamas-run government.

Eisenhower sailors weigh burnout vs. mission

Extended deployments take toll on ships, crew, may affect Navy retention, recruitment

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

On the flight deck of the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, Petty Officer 1st Class Keith Woodcock wiped his brow as the aircraft carrier navigated the Atlantic Ocean about 100 miles off the coast of Virginia.

It was day 274 of a 275-day deployment to the Middle East that sailors aboard the warship characterized as “nonstop.”

“She is tired,” Woodcock said about the ship. “We all are.”

The Eisenhower and its strike group returned July 14 to Naval Station Norfolk, Va., from a twice-extended deployment spent operating at a combat pace not seen since World War II.

Now, the USS Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group, which deployed in January from San Diego, has replaced the Eisenhower in the Middle East and is already hard at work defending against missile attacks on Red Sea shipping lanes by Houthi rebels in Yemen. In addition, the Defense Department announced Friday that the Roosevelt would soon be replaced by the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group in the region. The Lincoln deployed in May from San Diego to the Pacific.

These intense, extended deployments raise concerns for the Navy about sailor burnout and its effects on retaining crews. At the same time, clear missions with purpose such as battling the Houthis in the Red Sea could drive more people to recruiting offices, some defense analysts said.

“If you are a potential recruit and you are basing your decisions mostly on what you see in the news and what you see from the recruiting commands, then

you are going to be more likely to join the Navy. But if you base your decision on feedback you are getting from sailors themselves, it could be more of a mixed bag,” said retired Navy Cmdr. Bryan Clark, a senior fellow with the Hudson Institute think tank in Washington.

The Navy is projected to miss its recruiting goal for the second consecutive year while struggling to fill 18,000 jobs at sea.

The service set a goal to recruit 40,600 active-duty sailors during fiscal 2024 — a target the service is projected to miss, Vice Adm. Richard Cheeseman, the chief of naval personnel, told members of a House Armed Services subcommittee in April. As of June, the Navy had recruited 30,067 active-duty enlisted members since October, the start of the fiscal year, according to a quarterly meeting held by the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services.

The Navy is exceeding year-to-date retention forecasts among those who have been in the service for up to 14 years, the service said.

But how long that will last is uncertain, Clark said.

Seaman Ashton Phillips celebrated his past two birthdays at sea on the Eisenhower — one during the pre-deployment phase and the second on deployment in the Red Sea. As the carrier and crew prepared to return to its homeport, the 20-year-old said he was ready for a break from ship life.

“I have been getting dressed with my flashlight for the past nine months,” Phillips said. “I am looking forward to getting dressed with the lights on, not having to wear shoes in the shower — the simple things.”

The Eisenhower strike group

received a combat action ribbon, a military award for performance under fire. Navy leaders said the award was given to everyone who was part of the strike group, regardless of job, and helped keep crews across the group motivated during the deployment.

However, Mark Cancian, a senior adviser for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank, said he predicts the Navy will see a dip in retention due to sailor burnout, especially if deployment extensions with little notice continue.

“It is retention that deployments affect,” he said. “It’s the people who are experiencing it, who are aware of it and feel the impact.”

In the hangar bay of the Eisenhower, multiple sailors said news of the extensions, which came at the tail-end of the deployment, were some of the worst moments aboard the carrier. The crew, many of whom work in areas of the ship that are not climate-controlled, had to endure extreme heat serving in the Red Sea several weeks beyond their anticipated return date.

“Everyone was working hard expecting news we would be going home, when the orders came out we were extending,” said Lt. Cole Carey, an F-18 pilot. “It was horrible. For a couple days after each extension, the vibes were down across the entire boat.”

The Navy is taking on a lot of responsibility, spreading its fleet geographically thin, according to Cancian. The Navy is working to maintain an aircraft carrier presence in the Pacific, Europe and the Middle East. Additionally, the Defense Department in June released its strategy for the Arctic Region,

calling for a greater Navy presence in the High North.

“Hopes that the Navy and all the services could focus on the Pacific and pare back deployments elsewhere have not borne out. In fact, quite the opposite has happened,” Cancian said.

On the Eisenhower as the crew prepared for its homecoming July 14, evidence of the warship’s time at sea was hard to miss.

Inside, the floor of a galley was slick from cooking round-the-clock for the 5,000 sailors onboard. Stairwells near the anchor chain room were covered in moist black grime that threatened to stain the white dress uniforms of sailors brave enough to venture through the area. Those who had not yet changed for the homecoming instead wore work clothes, discolored from sweat and grease that refused to come out of the fabric.

Woodcock, a quartermaster, was part of the team responsible for navigation. His average shift began at 8 p.m. and ended at 4 a.m. He would work with the senior chief to plan new routes for the warship, ensuring it was where it needed to be when it needed to be there.

“We kind of reset the standard of a Navy deployment,” Woodcock said. “But is this going to be the new norm going forward? What are we doing to be doing a couple years down the line when we deploy? Is this what we are going to be doing?”

He said he wasn’t certain whether this deployment would change his perspective about continuing his Navy career.

“I think I need to relax before I answer that. Obviously, when duty calls, duty calls. But it definitely would change a lot of mindsets,” Woodcock said. “This was a beast.”

Burn pit registry to expand veteran eligibility

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

The registry of people exposed to toxic fumes while serving in the U.S. military is now automatically including those who deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan or any of the Middle Eastern, African and Asian nations on a newly expanded list.

The revamped Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry contains the names of approximately 4.7 million current and former service members from campaigns as far back as 1990, the Defense Department said in a statement Thursday.

Legislation requiring the Department of Veterans Affairs to create the registry stemmed from the raft of medical issues reported by veterans of the wars

in Iraq and Afghanistan, where burn pits were used extensively to dispose of trash.

"Being part of the registry is a way for individuals to help and improve our understanding of the challenges faced by service members and veterans affected by these exposures," Dr. Lester Martinez-Lopez, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, said in the statement.

The latest version not only makes inclusion automatic and based on deployment location, but also eliminates the need for the questionnaire the VA had been using for registry enrollment.

Applicants found the 140-question document lengthy and difficult to answer, according to an October 2022 study released

by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

It found the registry could not support research for the cause or origin of a veteran's disease or condition, or adequately monitor those exposed to airborne hazards.

As with the old system, no medical information is stored in the registry, the VA website said. The data includes military personnel information and demographics, such as service members' gender, race and ethnicity, as well as deployment locations.

The data is accessible only to a select group of VA epidemiologists and researchers, it added.

The registry was launched in 2014 at the direction of Congress

to spur clinical research and advance treatments for troops who had been exposed to toxic pollutants.

Those enrolled in the previous registry were carried over to the new system, the VA website said. Procedures have also been added so service members and veterans can opt out or re-enter the registry.

Active-duty service members can submit an inquiry to confirm their enrollment status, while veterans can contact their local environmental health coordinator, the VA said.

For anyone who wants to join the registry manually, instructions on the website explain the process. More information is available online or by phone at 1-800-698-2411.

Guam slated to homeport 1st Virginia-class fast-attack sub

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The Navy will beef up its submarine squadron on Guam in the coming months by homeporting one of the service's most advanced fast-attack subs there.

The Virginia-class USS Minnesota is expected to arrive in U.S. territory sometime during the next fiscal year that begins Oct. 1, Lt. Cmdr. Rick Moore, a spokesperson for U.S. Pacific Fleet Submarine Force, said by email Friday.

"We are committed to posturing our most capable platforms to preserve peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region," he wrote. "Although I am unable to discuss specifics at this time, the Navy routinely assesses its overseas force positioning, to include forward-deployed naval force submarines homeported in Guam."

USS Minnesota, which was commissioned in 2013, is currently homeported at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. In early

July, it completed a two-year maintenance overhaul at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility in Hawaii.

Guam is of growing importance to the Pentagon's Indo-Pacific strategy as China continues to expand its Navy and its ambitions in the region.

The U.S. territory is home to Andersen Air Force Base, Naval Base Guam and Camp Blaz, a massive Marine Corps base still under construction.

The island would serve as a crucial hub in the event of a conflict with China because it is the westernmost American territory and closest to the South China Sea, a flashpoint in the region.

Virginia-class subs are designed for a greater range of missions, with an emphasis on littoral operations, according to a Navy fact sheet. They support a host of missions, including anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface ship warfare, strike warfare, surveillance and reconnaissance.

Feds investigate company's hiring of former Army official

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

A former Army chief information officer's move into civilian employment has sparked a Justice Department investigation after the company that hired him received a complaint about his involvement in a government contract, according to ServiceNow, the technology vendor embroiled in the situation.

ServiceNow said it is cooperating with federal investigators and has informed the Defense Department inspector general and the Army Suspension and Debarment Office about the inquiry. The Army office makes decisions on whether companies violated policies and should be barred from contracting with the service for a length of time.

Raj Iyer, who the Army hired in November 2020 as its first civilian chief information officer, left that job in March 2023 to lead the global public sector for ServiceNow, a cloud-based software and artificial intelligence company based in California.

A year after Iyer joined ServiceNow, the company said it had received an internal complaint about his hiring and potential compliance issues during the procurement process of one of its government contracts, according to a company report released July 24.

Through a ServiceNow investigation that involved outside legal counsel, the company determined its president and chief operations officer Chirantan "CJ" Desai violated company policy regarding a possible conflict when hiring Iyer, according to the report.

Desai cooperated with the investigation and said he did not intentionally violate policy, yet he and Iyer resigned from ServiceNow last month.

"ServiceNow believes this was an isolated incident," said Madison DaValle, spokeswoman for the company. "The investigation is ongoing, and we will continue to cooperate with the government entities reviewing this matter as it moves towards resolution."

Houthi's missile hits container ship

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels struck a Liberian-flagged container ship traveling through the Gulf of Aden, authorities said Sunday, the first assault by the group since Israeli airstrikes targeted them.

The Houthis offered no explanation for the two-week pause in their attacks on shipping through the Red Sea corridor, which have seen similar slowdowns since the assaults began in November over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip. But the resumption comes after the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran, the Houthis' main benefactor, amid renewed concerns over the war breaking out into a regional conflict.

The rebels separately claimed to have shot down another U.S. military spy drone, without offering evidence.

The attack on Saturday happened some 140 miles southeast of Aden in a stretch of the Gulf of Aden that has seen numerous Houthi attacks previously. It hit the container ship Groton just above its waterline, causing minor damage, said the Joint Maritime Information Center, a multinational coalition over-

seen by the U.S. Navy. An earlier missile attack missed the vessel, the JMIC said.

"All crew on board are safe," the center said. "The vessel was reported diverting to a port nearby."

The Groton had left Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates bound for Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The Groton's Greek managers did not respond to a request for comment.

Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, a Houthi military spokesman, claimed the attack in a prerecorded statement Sunday afternoon.

The rebels have targeted more than 70 vessels with missiles and drones in a campaign that has killed four sailors.

The Houthis maintain that their attacks target ships linked to Israel, the United States or Britain as part of the rebels' campaign they say seeks to force an end to the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the war — including some bound for Iran.

In the case of the Groton, JMIC said that the ship "was targeted due to other vessels within its company structure making recent port calls in Israel."

Debby will likely to hit Fla. coast as hurricane

Associated Press

MIAMI — Tropical Storm Debby strengthened rapidly Sunday and was expected to become a hurricane as it moved through the Gulf of Mexico toward Florida, bringing with it the threat of devastating floods to the southeast Atlantic coast later in the week.

The storm was likely to become a Category 1 hurricane before making landfall Monday in the Big Bend region of Florida, the National Hurricane Center in Miami said.

From there, the storm is expected to move eastward over northern Florida and then stall over the coastal regions of Georgia and South Carolina, drenching the region with the potential of record-setting rains totaling up to 30 inches beginning Tuesday.

"There's some really amazing rainfall totals being forecast and amazing in a bad way," Michael Brennan, director of the National Hurricane Center in Miami, said at a briefing Sunday. "That would be record-breaking rainfall associated with a tropical cyclone for both the states of Georgia and South Carolina if we got up to the 30 inch level."

The flooding impacts, which could last through Friday, are expected to be especially severe in low-lying areas near the coast, including Savannah, Ga.; Hilton Head, S.C.; and Charles-

ton, S.C.

The hurricane center said in an update posted at 11 a.m. Sunday that Debby was located about 130 miles west-southwest of Tampa, Fla., and about 160 miles south-southwest of Cedar Key, Fla.

The storm was moving north-northwest at 13 mph with maximum sustained winds of 65 mph, up from 50 mph just a few hours ago.

Officials also warned of life-threatening storm surge along Florida's Gulf Coast, with 6 to 10 feet of inundation expected Monday between the Ochlockonee and Suwannee rivers.

"I'd urge all Floridians to be cognizant of the fact that we are going to have a hurricane hit the state, probably a Category 1, but it could be a little bit more powerful than that," Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said in a Sunday morning briefing.

"But we are absolutely going to see a lot of rainfall. We are going to see a lot of saturation. We are going to see flooding events," he said. "There is also going to be power outages."

DeSantis said that, for the first time, constructed flood control devices are being placed at utility stations to try to minimize the risk of power interruptions because of flooding.

"We think that is going to be able to mitigate some of the power outages," DeSantis said.

UK rioters tried to enter hotel thought to have migrants

Associated Press

LONDON — Police in the north of England town of Rotherham struggled to hold back a mob of far-right rioters Sunday who were seeking to break into a hotel believed to be housing asylum-seekers.

Before bringing the riot under some sort of control, police officers with shields had faced

a barrage of missiles, including bits of wood, chairs and fire extinguishers, as they sought to prevent the rioters, many of whom wore masks, from entering the Holiday Inn Express hotel. A small fire in a wheelie bin was also visible while windows in the hotel were smashed.

A police helicopter circled

overhead, and at least one injured officer in riot gear was carried away as the atmosphere turned febrile.

It was the latest bout of rioting to grip the U.K. following a stabbing rampage at a dance class last week in the north of England that left three girls dead and several wounded.

Oliver Coppard, the mayor of

South Yorkshire of which Rotherham is part, said he was "utterly appalled" by the violence.

"What we're seeing is not protest, it is brutal thuggery directed against some of the most vulnerable people in our society," he said. "We will come after those carrying out this violence with the full force of the law."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Warrant: Lawyer threatened inmate over sale of baby

TX FORT WORTH — A Texas attorney was arrested on charges of attempting to buy the unborn children of Tarrant County inmates.

Jody Hall, 68 — a Texas-based family and immigration attorney — was booked into the Hays County Jail on July 23 on two Tarrant County warrants, the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office said Thursday.

Authorities began investigating her and her business, Adoptions International Inc., in May in connection to unethical adoption practices. Detectives discovered Hall was paying money to pregnant Tarrant County inmates so they would place their unborn children up for adoption through her agency, according to the sheriff's office.

An arrest warrant affidavit obtained by The Fort Star-Telegram said Hall paid more than \$800 into one woman's jail accounts, and the payments stopped when the woman changed her mind about giving up the child. Hall called the woman a "scammer" and threatened to talk to the prosecutor over the woman's case, the affidavit states.

Man on trial jumps to his death, injures 2 others

CO DENVER — A defendant on trial jumped to his death from one of the upper floors inside the Lindsey-Flanigan Courthouse in Denver on Thursday and injured two other people, officials said.

Matt Jablow, spokesman for the Denver District Attorney's Office, told The Denver Post that the man who killed himself

was the defendant in a trial at the courthouse. Jablow declined to identify the man or say what he'd been charged with.

The two other people who were injured in the incident were taken to a hospital, police said. Officials said those injuries appeared to be minor.

2 sentenced for sexual assaults on passengers

WA SEATTLE — Two men accused of sexually assaulting passengers on airplanes in separate incidents during flights to Seattle were sentenced on Thursday.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Washington said in a statement that Abhinav Kumar of India was sentenced Thursday to 15 months in prison. Kumar, 39, was convicted of abusive sexual contact following a three-day trial in May.

Kumar was arrested at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on Feb. 18 for allegedly groping the breast of a juvenile while she was trying to sleep on an Emirates flight from Dubai to Seattle, according to court records and trial testimony.

Desmond Bostick, of Federal Way, Wash., was sentenced Thursday to nine months in prison for assault with intent to commit a felony. He pleaded guilty to the crime as part of a plea agreement in April and will serve three years of supervised release following his time in prison.

While seated in the last row of the plane during a flight from San Diego on June 20, 2023, Bostick repeatedly touched the thigh of a woman in the middle seat next to him, prosecutors said. He also grabbed her but-

tocks twice when she stood up to let a passenger in the window seat exit and reenter the row.

Mom sentenced for death of son found in freezer

MI DETROIT — A Detroit woman who pleaded guilty to killing her blind 3-year-old son, whose decomposing body was found in a basement freezer, has been sentenced to 35 to 60 years in prison.

A Wayne County judge sentenced Azuradee France, 33, on Monday for Chayce Allen's death. She pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in his death just before her trial was set to begin in mid-July.

Under her plea agreement, prosecutors dropped charges of felony murder, first-degree child abuse, torture and concealing the death of an individual that France had faced.

Detroit officers called to a Detroit home in June 2022 found Chayce's body in a basement freezer. France told police she had kicked her son in the chest in March 2022 in frustration because he would not eat and later placed his body in the freezer, The Detroit News reported.

Former legislator, 83, sentenced for kickbacks

AL BIRMINGHAM — The longest-serving member of the Alabama House of Representatives was sentenced to 13 months in federal prison last week on charges of federal conspiracy and obstruction of justice, despite an earlier nonbinding plea agreement that gave the 83-year-old a more lenient sentence to be served at home.

John Rogers was also

charged with one count of conspiracy to commit wire and mail fraud and one count of conspiracy to obstruct justice, as part of a kickback scheme that diverted hundreds of thousands of dollars from a fund intended to pay for community projects in Jefferson County.

Rogers is a Democrat from Birmingham first elected to the Alabama Legislature in 1982.

Between 2018 and 2022 federal prosecutors said that Rogers directed \$400,000 to a youth sports organization run by then-Rep. Fred Plump. Federal prosecutors said that Plump then gave approximately \$200,000 of that money back to Rogers and his former legislative aid Varrie Johnson Kindall.

Trump-backed McGuire wins in GOP recount

VA GOOCHLAND — Virginia state Sen. John McGuire, a former Navy SEAL who was endorsed by former President Donald Trump, on Thursday defeated conservative U.S. Rep. Bob Good in a recount of the Republican primary results in Virginia's 5th Congressional District.

McGuire narrowly defeated Good, one of the most conservative members of Congress and chair of the hard-right House Freedom Caucus.

Election officials previously certified a narrow McGuire win in the June 18 primary, by 374 votes out of nearly 63,000 cast. But with the margin of victory at just six-tenths of a percentage point, Good was entitled to a recount.

McGuire's margin of victory narrowed by four votes to 370 following Thursday's recount.

— From wire reports

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Ledecky wins 4th straight 800 free gold

Associated Press

NANTERRE, France — Every year on Aug. 3, Katie Ledecky is reminded of her first Olympic gold medal.

She was just 15 years old, a reserved high schooler who had surprisingly made the U.S. swim team for the London Games. Then she went out and shocked the world, beating everyone in the 800-meter freestyle.

Twelve years to the day, Ledecky did it again.

Not a stunner, but one for the ages.

Gold medal No. 9.

Ledecky capped another stellar Olympics by becoming only the second swimmer to win an event at four straight Summer Games, holding off

Ariarne Titmus, the “Terminator,” to win the 800 free Saturday night.

It was Ledecky’s second gold medal in Paris and the ninth of her remarkable career, which marked another milestone.

She became only the sixth Olympian to reach that figure, joining swimmer Mark Spitz, track star Carl Lewis, Soviet gymnast Larisa Latynina and Finnish runner Paavo Nurmi in a tie for second place.

The only athlete to win more golds: swimmer Michael Phelps with 23.

Ledecky was very aware of the significance of the date.

“Every Aug. 3, the video (of her first Olympic gold) gets posted somewhere and you kind of reminisce,” she said.

“So, when I saw it was Aug. 3, I was like, ‘Oh boy, I’ve got to get the job done.’”

That she did, going faster than her winning time in Tokyo to finish in 8 minutes, 11.04 seconds. Titmus was right on her shoulder nearly the entire race, but Ledecky pulled away in the final 100.

Titmus, who beat Ledecky in the 400 freestyle, settled for silver at 8:12.29. The bronze went to another American, Paige Madden at 8:13.00.

US sets world record

The United States made up for a disappointing showing in Tokyo by setting a world record in the 4x100 mixed medley relay.

Ryan Murphy, Nic Fink,

Gretchen Walsh and Torri Huske held off China for a winning time of 3:37.43, breaking the mark of 3:37.58 set by Britain when it won gold in the wild and woolly event’s Olympic debut three years ago.

With each team picking two men and two women, the U.S. and China both went with their male swimmers in the first two legs.

Murphy put the U.S. in front on the backstroke, China’s Qin Haiyang slipped past Nic Fink on the breaststroke, but Walsh stormed back in front for the Americans on the butterfly before Huske held off Yang Junxuan to secure the gold.

For Huske, it was her second gold to go with two silvers in Paris.

Army veteran Hancock successfully defends skeet title

By MATT WAGNER

Stars and Stripes

CHATEAUROUX, France — Army veteran Vincent Hancock took his United States teammate Conner Prince under his wing four years ago and noticed his talent immediately.

In fact, Hancock, a three-time Olympic champion in men’s skeet, described the youngster’s talent as on par with his own.

So, plenty of times on the range in Northlake, Texas, near where they live, Hancock and Prince have discussed not just either one of them winning gold in men’s skeet at the Paris Games but taking the silver medal as well.

On Saturday afternoon at the Chateauroux Shooting Centre, they realized that dream. And in the end, the teacher outlasted the student in a duel in the men’s skeet final, as Hancock took gold with a 58-57 victory.

Chinese Taipei’s Meng Yuan Lee took home the bronze.

“I cannot be happier that we went 1-2,” Hancock said. “We’ve been talking about this.

We shoot together, and we’ve been talking about this for years. So, knowing that we’re able to talk this into existence...”

The victory gave Hancock more than just his fourth Olympic gold.

The 35-year-old former sergeant in the Army Marksmanship Unit entered rarified air. He became just the second shooter to win four individual golds in Olympic history and the first to do it in the same discipline. South Korea’s Jong-oh Jin won the men’s 50-meter pistol three times and the 10-meter air pistol once.

The Eatonton, Ga., native joined an elite list of six athletes across all disciplines in winning his latest medal. The group includes Games legends in American Al Oerter in the discus, Dane Paul Elvstrom in sailing one-person class, American Carl Lewis in the long jump, American Michael Phelps in swimming’s 200-meter individual medley and Cuban Mijain Lopez in the heavyweight class

of Greco-Roman wrestling.

American swimmer Katie Ledecky became the seventh Saturday evening with her fourth-straight victory in the women’s 800-meter freestyle race.

Having idolized Carl Lewis growing up and seeing Phelps compete as a fellow Olympian, the significance isn’t lost on Hancock.

“That’s pretty special for me because I love the Olympics,” he said. “Knowing that I’ve been able to do what I’ve done in this sport and be able to get four and be able to have my name in the same echelon as theirs, that’s special to me.”

Heading into the finals, Hancock needed to make up some ground to get to the top.

He missed two targets during the final two rounds of qualifying on Saturday morning. That placed him in fourth, meaning if he and another competitor were tied with the same score at an elimination point and that person had a qualification score higher than his, Hancock would have been out.

The exception would have been with the final two athletes, who then would have gone to a shoot-off.

It didn’t look to be an issue until after 30 shots and the four remaining competitors — Prince, Italy’s Tammaro Cassandro, Lee and Hancock — were tied on 29 clays. The trio all finished above him in qualification.

Cassandro missed two shots early in the next round, and Lee missed a pair while Hancock and Prince missed only one each over the next 20 shots to stay tied at 48.

That left Prince and Hancock with 10 shots to decide who got gold and silver.

“It feels like home,” Prince said of competing against his mentor.

The American sharpshooters traded targets for the first six shots across two spots. But on his first shot in the last position, Prince missed, giving Hancock the opening he needed.

And the mentor took it, hitting the last four clays for yet another gold.

Biles vaults to 7th gold; bronze for Carey

Associated Press

PARIS — Simone Biles is getting kind of old for this. Just maybe not too old to keep going. Maybe.

Minutes after the American gymnastics star won the seventh Olympic gold of her career on Saturday in a vault final that left little doubt that even at 27 she remains in a class by herself, she played coy when asked if the event marked the final time she would ever explode off the springboard in competition.

While Biles allowed she was officially retiring her eponymous Yurchenko double pike vault because “I kind of nailed that one” at the Paris Olympics, she didn’t rule out a return to the Games when they move to Los Angeles in 2028.

“Never say never,” Biles said. “Next Olympics are at home. So you just never know. I am getting really old.”

At times, it’s hard to tell.

Her sequined red leotard a blur in the air, Biles averaged 15.300 on her two vaults to claim a second gold in the event eight years after she triumphed in Rio de Janeiro.

Three years ago in the run-up to Tokyo she tinkered with the Yurchenko double pike, the har-

dest vault ever done by a woman, but she didn’t get a chance to throw it in the Olympics. She opted instead for an Amanar, which requires 2½ twists.

That changed in the team final, when the “twisties” she’d been experiencing forced her to bail out of an Amanar and multiple event finals, forever altering the course of her career.

The experience left both Biles and co-coach Laurent Landi a little “traumatized,” as Biles put it. They both agreed there was no need to revisit the Amanar while preparing for Paris.

Yet rather than opt for something easier, they chose something even more difficult. Fitting for an athlete who needs to be challenged to stay engaged.

The Yurchenko double pike requires Biles to race down the runway before doing a round-off/back handspring onto the table followed by two backward flips with her arms clasped behind her knees.

Over the last year, she has mastered it. It became the fifth element named after her in the sport’s Code of Points when she did it at the 2023 world championships.

On the surface, she makes it look easy. Underneath, it actual-

ly makes her anxious. Power isn’t the only thing the YDP requires. Control is important, too. Go in too hard and you might land on your back. Too little, and you come up short and crunch your ankles and just about everything else.

Landi pantomimed “calm down” before Biles saluted the judges, then watched her do what the woman who describes herself as “Simone Biles from Spring, Texas, who flips” does as well as any gymnast — male or female — has ever done.

She flew. She soared off the table and landed with a big bounce — a nod to the energy she generates — with her right foot on the out-of-bounds line.

The judges dinged her a tenth of a point for that. It hardly mattered.

Her score of 15.700 meant she merely needed to avoid disaster on her second vault to win. Instead, she almost stuck her Cheng, which requires a round-off onto the springboard, and a half twist onto the block followed by 1½ twists while doing a forward somersault. The 14.9 she received meant the fight for gold was over.

Rebeca Andrade of Brazil, who finished runner-up to Biles

in the all-around final on Thursday, edged American Jade Carey for silver. Not that Carey was complaining. Three years after tripping during the vault final and finishing last, Carey achieved the “redemption” she was looking for when she pointed to an Olympic return.

“I wanted to prove to myself that I can do two vaults in the final,” Carey said. “(To) walk away with the medal is really special for me.”

Carey’s Olympics are over. Biles’ are not. She will have two more chances to boost her medal haul in Paris in the beam and floor exercise finals on Monday.

Biles has 10 career medals, tied for the third most by a female gymnast. Larisa Latynina piled up 18 while competing for the Soviet Union in the 1950s and ’60s.

Not that it matters much to the “Greatest of All Time.” She’s gained something far more valuable anyway: silence.

Funny how the critics who pounced on her after Tokyo suddenly find themselves speechless after watching her win her third gold medal in Paris.

“They’re really quiet now,” she said with a touch of sarcasm, “so that’s strange.”

Faulkner wins first US medal in road race since ’84

Associated Press

PARIS — Kristen Faulkner timed her attack to perfection to win the women’s road race at the Paris Olympics on Sunday, becoming the first American rider in 40 years to win a medal in the event.

The 158 kilometer (98-mile) route started and finished in Paris, with Faulkner crossing the line at the Trocadéro in a fraction under four hours.

Faulkner finished 58 seconds clear of Dutch rider Marianne Vos, Lotte Kopecky of Belgium and Blanka Vas of Hungary, who were separated by a photo finish with Vos taking silver and Kopecky clinching the bronze.

Faulkner and Kopecky caught up to Vos and Vas with about three kilometers left. As Faulkner attacked, the other three hesitated

and then could not catch her.

She only had the Eiffel Tower and glory ahead of her.

“It’s a dream come true,” Faulkner said. “It’s the best feeling in the world. I don’t know how to describe it.”

The 31-year-old Alaska native is the first American to win a road race medal of any color since the 1984 Los Angeles Games, when Connie Carpenter and Alexi Grewal swept the gold medals.

Huge crowds cheered the riders rolled through Paris’ Latin Quarter and then along past the Orsay museum — once a train station.

The trek featured eight hilly sections along the way, with the biggest ascent up Côte des Gardes lasting 1.9 kilometers as riders approached Versailles — home to a famed pal-

ace and where equestrian events are taking place during the Paris Games.

There were also three climbs up to Montmartre, the area of Paris known for its cobblestoned passageways, its quaint artistic atmosphere and, most visibly, the white Sacré Coeur basilica perched imperiously atop Montmartre hill.

Afghan sisters Fariba and Yulduz Hashimi were briefly part of an early breakaway, but they were soon caught. Slovakian Nora Jencusova then broke away on her own before being joined by the Hashimis and two other riders.

After entering Paris, riders zoomed past crowds flocking around the Louvre museum — home to the Mona Lisa — and the breakaway was swallowed up by the peloton.

Twins extend White Sox losing streak

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The Chicago White Sox extended their team-record losing streak to 19, giving up Max Kepler's tie-breaking home run in the seventh inning that lifted the Minnesota Twins to a 6-2 win on Saturday night.

"It can't go on forever," White Sox starter Garrett Crochet said. "Showing up to the field every day, we're expecting to break the streak."

Chicago's losing streak is the longest since Baltimore dropped 19 in a row in August 2021 and tied the seventh-longest since 1901.

The White Sox were held to three hits for the second straight night and to three hits or fewer for the 12th time this season.

"It's a lot of pressure," White Sox manager Pedro Grifol said. "You can't afford to make mistakes."

Kepler, who entered in the fifth inning as a pinch hitter, hit his seventh home run of the season. The drive to right off Touki Toussaint (0-1) sent the Twins to their 11th win in 12 games against the White Sox this season.

Yankees 8, Blue Jays 3: Aaron Judge launched his 41st home run, adding to his major league-leading total, and host New York beat Toronto.

Anthony Volpe and No. 9 batter Trent Grisham also hit two-run shots off José Berríos to help Carlos Rodón (12-7) win his third consecutive start after going 0-5 in his previous six.

Cardinals 5, Cubs 4: A Chicago fielding mix-up allowed Nolan Arenado's short fly to drop for a tying, two-run single in a three-run eighth inning. Tommy Pham tripled and scored in the ninth, and visiting St. Louis won.

Arenado hit a fly to short center that second baseman Nico Hoerner called for and was readying to catch when center fielder Pete Crow-Armstrong

called him off. Crow-Armstrong couldn't get to the ball, which dropped 213 feet from the plate as two runs scored.

Nationals 6, Brewers 4: Luis García Jr. was a triple shy of the cycle in his second straight three-hit game, Kyle Finnegan got a four-out save in his first outing since blowing a four-run lead and host Washington beat Milwaukee to stop a five-game losing streak.

Travis Blankenhorn hit a two-run double on a ball that left fielder Jackson Chourio allowed to drop behind him at the base of the wall during a two-out rally as Washington took a 4-0, first-inning lead.

Rays 6, Astros 1: Josh Lowe homered twice to help visiting Tampa Bay beat Houston.

Lowe hit his sixth and seventh homers of the season for his second career multi-homer game.

He added a double in the third and a single in the ninth to go 4-for-5 for the first four-hit game of his career.

Tigers 6, Royals 5 (11): Wenceel Pérez singled with two outs in the 11th inning and host Detroit rallied three times to beat Kansas City.

The Tigers trailed in the ninth, 10th and 11th innings, and ended a five-game losing streak. Kansas City had won five straight.

Reds 6, Giants 4: Tyler Stephenson hit two of his team's four home runs to lead host Cincinnati to a win over San Francisco, one day after it was no-hit by Blake Snell.

Hunter Greene (8-4) stretched his scoreless innings streak to 21 with six shutout innings and 11 strikeouts, and has now gone six consecutive starts allowing one or zero runs, tying him for the team single-season record with Johnny Vander Meer, who did it in 1938. Vander Meer pitched back-to-back no-hit games that season.

Orioles 7, Guardians 4: Zach Eflin won his second straight

start since joining the rotation and Gunnar Henderson had three hits and an RBI as Baltimore stopped host Cleveland's five-game winning streak.

Eflin (7-7) cooled off the AL Central-leading Guardians, holding them to two runs and five hits in 6⅓ innings. The right-hander was acquired from Tampa Bay on July 26 for three minor leaguers.

Marlins 4, Braves 3: Jesús Sánchez hit a tiebreaking double in the seventh inning and visiting Miami beat red-hot Atlanta, halting its four-game winning streak.

Jake Burger was 2-for-5 with a home run and two RBIs. It was the fourth home run in five games for Burger and his 17th of the season. Sánchez was 3-for-5 with two doubles and two RBIs and a steal while Nick Fortes was 2-for-4 with two runs scored. Xavier Edwards extended his on-base streak to 20 games by going 1-for-3 with two walks in the win.

Rangers 7, Red Sox 4: Jonah Heim and Leody Taveras homered back-to-back from the bottom of the order to erase a three-run deficit in the fourth inning as host Texas beat Boston.

Two pitches after Heim's 10th homer, a tying three-run shot on a high drive down the line in right field, Taveras pulled a liner into the first row in right for his ninth in the second win over the past eight games for the defending World Series champions.

Pirates 4, Diamondbacks 2: Bryan Reynolds and Joey Bart homered and host Pittsburgh beat Arizona.

Reynolds' two-run shot to center off Slade Cecconi in the sixth inning broke a 1-1 tie. Bart opened the scoring with a solo shot in the second inning off starter Jordan Montgomery.

Padres 3, Rockies 2: Xander Bogaerts hit a go-ahead RBI single in the seventh inning and

Martín Pérez pitched six innings of one-run ball in his debut for host San Diego to snap a five-game losing streak to last-place Colorado.

After being held to one run and one hit in six innings by rookie Tanner Gordon, the Padres broke through against reliever Peter Lambert (2-5) in the seventh. Jake Cronenworth hit a leadoff single, Manny Machado doubled and Bogaerts singled to left to give the Padres a 2-1 lead. Rookie Jackson Merrill followed with a sacrifice fly.

Dodgers 10, Athletics 0: Jack Flaherty (8-5) pitched six sharp innings in his Los Angeles debut as it snapped a three-game losing streak by beating host Oakland.

Shohei Ohtani stole three bases for Los Angeles to give him 31 on the season to go with his 33 homers. It's just the fourth time a Dodgers player reached the 30-30 club in a season and only three players in the majors doing it faster than Ohtani, who accomplished it in the 111th game of the season.

Angels 5, Mets 4: Zach Neto drove in a career-high four runs, including three with a go-ahead home run in the seventh inning, and host Los Angeles rallied for a victory over New York despite J.D. Martinez's second grand slam in eight games.

Neto connected on a cutter from Huascar Brazobán (1-3) and put it in the Mets' bullpen in left field to put the Halos back on top.

Mariners 6, Phillies 5 (10): Mitch Haniger walked with the bases loaded in the bottom of the 10th inning to score Randy Arozarena with the winning run, and host Seattle rallied from a 5-0 deficit for a win over Philadelphia.

Seattle handed Philadelphia its sixth straight loss, the longest losing streak for the Phillies since early in the 2023 season when they also dropped six consecutive games.