

## Audit: Troops unprotected from PFAS

*Associated Press*

The Defense Department has dragged its feet on protecting service personnel from “forever chemicals” at military installations and isn’t doing enough to track health effects from exposure to the toxic compounds, according to an internal audit.

Officials have taken steps to find and clean groundwater contaminated with firefighting foam containing PFAS, or perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, the department’s inspector general found. But its recently released report said the Pentagon has fallen short on dealing with other sources of the chemicals as its rules require.

It also found that despite plans to test military firefighters’ blood for PFAS this year as required by Congress, officials have no plan for tracking and analyzing results on a department-wide basis.

The department “is missing an opportunity to capture comprehensive PFAS exposure data for DoD firefighters to be

used for risk management, including future studies to assess significant long-term health effects relating to PFAS,” according to the audit, which is dated July 22.

A Pentagon spokesman had no immediate comment.

PFAS refers to thousands of man-made compounds used in countless products, including nonstick cookware, water-repellent sports gear, cosmetics and grease-resistant food packaging, along with firefighting foams.

Public health studies on exposed populations have associated the chemicals with an array of health problems, including some cancers, weakened immunity and low birth weight.

Widespread testing in recent years has found high levels of PFAS in many public water systems. They’re called “forever chemicals” because they don’t degrade in the environment.

PFAS substances have been found in groundwater on or near more than 300

military bases, according to the nonprofit Environmental Working Group.

“Some of the highest detections anywhere in the world been found in groundwater” at military installations, said Scott Faber, the Environmental Working Group’s senior vice president for government affairs. That means personnel “were drinking extraordinarily polluted water for much longer than they should have been, in violation of the department’s own policies.”

In recent years, the Pentagon has tested wells and groundwater at bases for two widely used PFAS chemicals and begun removing foam containing one of them from its stockpiles, the audit said.

But aside from firefighting foam, the department hasn’t addressed potential pollution from other PFAS-containing materials as its rules require, the report said.

“As a result, people and the environment may continue to be exposed to preventable risks,” it said.

## Synthetic opioids may upend Afghan heroin market

**BY JOHN VANDIVER**

*Stars and Stripes*

The global drug trade could eventually accomplish what the U.S. military tried and failed to do in Afghanistan: bust up a heroin industry that fuels insurgencies and corruption.

A threat to the Afghan heroin market — which accounts for anywhere between 10%-30% of that country’s gross domestic product — looms because of a growing preference among drug producers for far cheaper synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl, according to a new Rand Corp. study.

“All told, fentanyl represents an attractive alternative for drug producers and marketers who are looking to reduce their operating costs and risks. Therefore ... when comparing the two drugs, it is hard to see how heroin can compete directly or indefinitely with this low-cost, high potency alternative,” Rand said in its report that examined the im-

plications for Afghanistan.

Since the early days of the war in Afghanistan, U.S. forces sought to curtail the heroin trade in the country. The efforts ranged from attempts to get farmers to shift from poppy to pomegranate trees, to more extreme measures. For example, in 2009, then-NATO Supreme Allied Commander Gen. John Craddock issued a memo stating that troops should shoot on sight those affiliated with the drug industry. The plan caused a stir at NATO headquarters and was eventually rescinded because of a backlash among allies.

But over time, market forces could prove to be more of a threat to Afghanistan’s opioid industry than NATO forces ever were.

Fentanyl is already displacing major heroin markets in the U.S. While fatal overdoses and drug seizures related to heroin have been on the decline, they’re rising in connection with synthetic

opioid use, Rand said.

Fentanyl is similar to morphine, but is 50 to 100 times more potent, the U.S. National Institute for Drug Abuse said on its website. It’s used legally to treat severe pain and following some surgeries.

Fentanyl can be churned out in laboratories from cheap chemicals, providing quicker turnarounds than harvesting the poppies that are key to the Afghan trade.

So far, the Afghan heroin industry does not appear to have taken a serious hit, but that’s because most of the trade involves European and Asian markets rather than North America, Rand said. The future of the industry in Afghanistan will hinge on whether Europe and Asia-based illegal drug traders make the same shift as their U.S. counterparts.

Historically, the Taliban have been among the big beneficiaries of the opioid trade, deriving up to \$400 million a year in revenue connected to the business, Rand said.

# Austin addresses bias against Asians in US

By DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, speaking in Singapore on Tuesday, recognized discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States, but said that while the U.S. “doesn’t always get it right,” admitting its flaws is a unique characteristic of democracy.

Delivering the Fullerton Lecture at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Austin also emphasized the importance of partnerships and transparency in the international community, namely in Southeast Asia.

“Our partnerships draw strength from our shared belief in greater openness, and our belief that people live best when they govern

themselves,” he said.

But “our democratic values aren’t always easy to reach” and the U.S. “doesn’t always get it right,” the defense chief added.

“We’ve seen some painful lapses, like the unacceptable and frankly un-American discrimination that some Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have endured in my country in recent months,” Austin said.

Reports of anti-Asian hate crime rose dramatically in major cities during the first quarter of this year compared to the same period in 2020, according to a study by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino.

The compilation of policing data, published in June, found that Asian hate crime reports in that period rose 262% in New York

City, 80% in Los Angeles and 60% in Boston.

The university published a separate analysis in March that found anti-Asian hate crime in 16 of the largest U.S. cities had risen 145% in 2020. The analysis noted that “the first spike” of reports occurred in March and April “amidst a rise in COVID cases and negative stereotyping of Asians relating to the pandemic.”

Vivid descriptions of attacks from across the country did not go unnoticed by the international community.

United Nations representatives expressed their “serious concern” after finding that “racially motivated violence and other incidents against Asian-Americans have reached an alarming level across the United States since the outbreak of COVID-19.”

## Airmen able to keep some unused leave for 3 years

*Stars and Stripes*

Airmen and guardians will be able to keep up to 120 days of leave through 2024, which is more than double the usual amount allowed to be accrued, an Air Force administrative memo said.

Unused leave exceeding 60 days is normally lost at the end of each fiscal year, but coronavirus-related restrictions since last year have made it difficult for service members and others to take vacations.

“Rest and recuperation are vital to mo-

rale, unit and professional performance, and overall motivation for Airmen and Guardians,” acting Air Force Secretary John Roth said in a July 21 memo.

A Defense Department special leave accrual policy had already allowed airmen to retain up to 120 days of leave through September 2023. The memo further extends leave accrued by the end of September of this year through Sept. 30, 2024.

Many airmen and guardians, “through no fault of their own, have found it difficult to

reduce their individual leave balances,” Roth said.

The policy change applies to Air Force and Space Force members on active duty, and Reserve and Guard airmen on Title 10 or Title 32 orders.

Roth stressed the importance of not waiting too long to take time off, despite the extension.

“Commanders will continue to encourage and provide members with opportunities to use leave in the year it is earned,” he said.

## Monthly cross-training puts airmen in peers’ boots

By THERON GODBOLD  
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Security forces at the home of U.S. Forces Japan recently put on a day of basic training for fellow service members interested in how the air base is kept secure.

For some, it was an immersive experience. About a half-dozen airmen were pepper-sprayed as part of the event sponsored by the 374th Mission Support Group on July 21.

“The big thing we want to do is immerse the younger airmen and noncommissioned officers across the group,” Master Sgt. Dock Caudill, a quality assurance leader at the support group compli-

ance and standardization office, told Stars and Stripes during the training.

This was the fifth event since a program began in March to familiarize airmen on base with the work done in other units. They are scheduled for the third Wednesday of each month, Caudill said.

He said this type of training gives the newer airmen a sense of what working in other career fields is like and helps them to better understand what every squadron in the group brings to the fight.

Previous training on the base involved the civil engineering office, the communications squadron and logistics support squadron, Caudill said.

For the 374th Security Forces Squad-

ron event, subjects on the agenda included escalation of force, hazardous traffic stops and the application of pepper spray.

The airmen who volunteered to be pepper-sprayed said they looked forward to the experience, but would hopefully only have to endure it once.

For that portion of the daylong event, volunteers were sprayed and then asked to negotiate an obstacle course with a dummy version of a weapon while shouting orders to their comrades.

This monthly training coincidentally lined up with the Navy’s security exercise, Citadel Pacific, which took place this month at Navy bases across the region.

# US steps up Afghanistan airstrikes

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military has launched more than a dozen airstrikes in the past week in support of Afghan government forces in their fight against the Taliban, a sharp spike over the handful that were done in the previous six weeks, according to U.S. officials.

The Pentagon said Tuesday that both conventional warplanes and armed drones were used, but did not provide details. A U.S. official, however, gave some specifics and said there has been a significant increase in strikes since July 20, with the number sometimes reaching almost a handful a day.

The strikes, which include several conducted last week, indi-

cate stepped up U.S. support after weeks of battlefield gains by the Taliban as U.S. troops complete their withdrawal. U.S. officials have said that the aircraft have been flown from bases outside of Afghanistan because the U.S. military pulled its combat planes out of the country.

"A number of strikes have occurred over the last several days from both manned and unmanned strike platforms," Maj. Robert Lodewick, a Pentagon spokesman, said.

According to officials, the airstrikes have largely been in direct support of Afghan forces under attack by the Taliban, but several also struck military equipment that had been captured by the Taliban. The officials spoke

on condition of anonymity to provide greater detail on the attacks.

The airstrikes have been launched in a number of regions in the country, but a key focus has been around Kandahar, a provincial center that officials worry could fall to the Taliban. The Taliban now control more than 200 of the 419 district centers and have made progress in cutting off some supply routes. But while they are putting pressure on up to half of the 34 provincial capitals, they have yet to seize control of any.

Gen. Frank McKenzie, the head of U.S. Central Command, who is overseeing the U.S. military withdrawal and making decisions on air support for Afghan troops, said Sunday that air-

strikes had been increasing.

"We're prepared to continue this heightened level of support in the coming weeks if the Taliban continue their attacks," McKenzie said.

McKenzie also said the United States was providing "contract logistics support both here in Kabul and over-the-horizon in the region, funding for them, intelligence sharing, and advising and assisting through security consultations at the strategic level."

CENTCOM says the U.S. troop withdrawal is more than 95% complete. It is set to be finished by Aug. 31. Whether the U.S. will continue to provide airstrikes in support of Afghan government forces after that date is yet to be determined.

## Tokyo tops 3K new COVID-19 cases, US military reports 15

**BY JOSEPH DITZLER**

*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — Japan's capital city, nearly midstream in its Olympic Games, announced Wednesday that 3,177 people had contracted the coronavirus, a new one-day pandemic record.

That tally exceeds the benchmark set Tuesday by 329 cases, according to public broadcaster NHK and metro government data. This fifth wave of coronavirus by numbers alone is the most extreme the metro area has experienced during the 1 1/2-year-long pandemic.

Kanagawa, a nearby prefecture that's home to several U.S. military installations, also reported its highest one-day case-load of the pandemic: 1,051 new COVID-19 patients, NHK reported.

The spike in new cases comes as over 11,000 Olympic athletes, their entourages, Olympic officials and foreign media are in Tokyo for the games, scheduled for another

11 days.

NHK, citing Olympic organizers, reported 16 new COVID-19 patients among Olympic staff and media Wednesday for a total of 169 since July 1. No new athletes tested positive, according to the broadcaster.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military in Japan had reported 15 new patients at four installations as of 6 p.m. Wednesday.

U.S. Army Japan, headquartered at Camp Zama, 26 miles from central Tokyo, had nine people test positive in the past week, according to a news release.

The Marine Corps had four people test positive at its bases on Okinawa, but did not specify the installations, according to a Facebook post by Marine Corps Installations Pacific.

Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni and Sasebo Naval Base each reported one new COVID-19 patient in the previous day, according to a news release and social media from the bases.

## CDC updates rules on masks indoors for some US areas

*Associated Press*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention changed course Tuesday on some masking guidelines, recommending that even vaccinated people return to wearing masks indoors in parts of the United States where the delta variant of the coronavirus is fueling infection surges.

Citing new information about the variant's ability to spread among vaccinated people, the CDC also recommended indoor masks for all teachers, staff, students and visitors at schools nationwide, regardless of vaccination status.

The CDC's new mask policy follows recent decisions in Los Angeles and St. Louis to revert to indoor mask mandates amid the spike in COVID-19 infections. The nation is averaging more than 57,000 cases a day and 24,000 COVID-19 hospitalizations.

The guidance on masks in indoor public places applies in parts of the U.S. with at least 50

new cases per 100,000 people in the last week. That includes 60% of U.S. counties, officials said. New case rates are particularly high in the South and Southwest, according to a CDC tracker. In Arkansas, Louisiana and Florida, every county has a high transmission rate.

Most new infections in the U.S. continue to be among unvaccinated people. So-called breakthrough infections, which generally cause milder illness, can occur in vaccinated people. When earlier strains of the virus predominated, infected vaccinated people were found to have low levels of virus and were deemed unlikely to spread the virus much, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said.

But with the delta variant, a mutated and more transmissible version of the virus, the level of virus in infected vaccinated people is "indistinguishable" from the level of virus in the noses and throats of unvaccinated people, Walensky said.



# Rioters' racism at center of Jan. 6 hearing

Associated Press

It had only been hinted at in previous public examinations of the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection: Scores of rioters attacked police officers not just with makeshift weapons, stun guns and fists, but with racist slurs and accusations of treason.

Four officers, two from the U.S. Capitol Police and two from D.C.'s Metropolitan Police Department, on Tuesday detailed the racism and bigotry they encountered during the violent assault on the Capitol. Their direct, harrowing accounts laid out the hours when the pro-police sentiment of supporters of former President Donald Trump was pushed aside, consumed by the fury of wanting to keep him in the

White House.

Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn told lawmakers about an exchange he had with rioters, who disputed that President Joe Biden defeated Trump. When Dunn, who is Black, argued with the rioters that he voted for Biden and his vote should be counted, a crowd began hurling the N-word at him.

"One woman in a pink 'MAGA' (Make America Great Again) shirt yelled, 'You hear that, guys, this n—— voted for Joe Biden!'" said Dunn, who has served more than a dozen years on the Capitol Police force.

"Then the crowd, perhaps around 20 people, joined in, screaming 'Boo! F—— n—— !'" he testified. He said

no one had ever called him the N-word while he was in uniform. That night, he sat in the Capitol Rotunda and wept.

The panel's chairman, Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, pressed Dunn further about how he felt being an African American officer facing down racists and enduring racial slurs in the halls of democracy.

"It's just so disheartening that people like that will attack you just for the color of your skin," Dunn replied. "Once I was able to process it, it hurt. My blood is red. I'm an American citizen. I'm a police officer. I'm a peace officer."

Another Capitol Police officer, Sgt. Aquilino Gonell,

wiped away tears as he recalled his immigration to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic, only to face fellow Americans who considered him a traitor for defending the Capitol that day.

Gonell, an Iraq War veteran, also called out the disparate law enforcement response to the overwhelmingly white crowd of rioters and the response to racial justice protests in 2020.

"As America and the world watched in horror what was happening to us at the Capitol, we did not receive timely reinforcements and support we needed," he said. "During the Black Lives Matter protest last year, U.S. Capitol Police had all the support we needed and more. Why the different response?"

## Tensions aside, US and Russia talk arms control

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senior diplomats from the United States and Russia held what the State Department described as "substantive and professional" talks on arms control and other strategic issues on Wednesday despite myriad other differences that have sent relations into a tailspin.

The State Department said the discussions in Geneva produced no breakthroughs but said they did yield the minimum for a positive result of such negotiations: an agreement to meet again in the context of talks endorsed by Presidents Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin.

"We remain committed, even in times of tension, to ensuring predictability and reducing the risk of armed conflict and threat of nuclear war," the department said in a statement.

The two presidents had agreed to resume strategic talks when they met in Geneva last month.

Moving ahead on this front, despite their deep differences on other issues, reflects the high priority that Putin and Biden place on avoiding a new nuclear arms race. In a brief statement, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Wednesday's talks yielded a "comprehensive discussion of the sides' approaches to maintaining strategic stability, the prospects for arms control and measures to reduce risks."

The State Department called it the beginning of a dialogue.

"The U.S. delegation discussed U.S. policy priorities and the current security environment, national perceptions of threats to strategic stability, prospects for new nuclear arms control and the format for future Strategic Stability Dialogue sessions," it said.

## Iran supreme leader criticizes US as nuclear talks are stalled

Associated Press

TEHRAN — Iran's supreme leader on Wednesday called the United States "stubborn" in stalled nuclear talks in Vienna for discussing Tehran's missiles and regional influence, likely signaling challenges ahead in efforts to revive its tattered atomic accord with world powers.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's remarks come as his hard-line protege, President-elect Ebrahim Raisi, is poised to be sworn in next week as the head of the country's civilian government.

While Raisi has said he wants to return to the deal, which saw Iran limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions, Khamenei seemingly called for a more adversarial approach in his remarks. They also appeared

to describe outgoing President Hassan Rouhani's eight-year government as naive for its approach in reaching the 2015 agreement as its officials sat before him.

"Others should use your experiences. This experience is a distrust of the West," Khamenei said in remarks broadcast by state television. "In this government, it was shown up that trust in the West does not work."

He added: "Westerners do not help us, they hit wherever they can."

The U.S. State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Biden administration days earlier criticized Iran for saying America had delayed a possible prisoner-swap deal, calling it "an outrageous effort to deflect blame for the current impasse."

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Lawmaker defends using campaign cash at club

**MI** DEARBORN — A Michigan lawmaker who spent campaign money at a strip club said it has “great lamb chops.”

State Rep. Jewell Jones, a Democrat, reported spending \$221 in March at the Pantheon Club in Dearborn to discuss economic development, The Detroit News reported, citing public records.

“We have (to) meet people where they’re at some times ... #HOLLA,” Jones said in a text message to a reporter.

Jones, who is in his mid-20s, has made headlines lately for a drunken driving case, which is still pending in Livingston County.

### Spinal injuries prompt warnings against diving

**VA** VIRGINIA BEACH — Lifeguards in Virginia Beach are warning people against diving into murky and shallow water at the oceanfront in the wake of three people reporting spinal cord injuries this year.

Tom Gill is chief of the Virginia Beach Lifesaving Service. He told The Virginian-Pilot that if “you can’t see what you’re diving into, you shouldn’t dive into it.”

Chad Rosenbrock dove into the surf in June and reportedly hit his head. The impact broke several vertebrae. The 46-year-old Navy veteran was paralyzed from the chest down.

Virginia beach saw six suspected spinal injuries in 2020, three in 2019, two in 2018 and seven in 2017.

### Man cited after child, 2, rescued from porch roof

**NC** JACKSONVILLE — A North Carolina man was cited after firefighters rescued a 2-year-old from the roof of a home, police said.

Jacksonville police spokeswoman Beth Purcell said in a news release that officers and emergency personnel responded to a report of a child on a roof over the front porch of a home located on the city’s north side.

Firefighters used a ladder to remove the child from the roof, and Purcell said the child was unharmed.

Jacksonville police charged Justin Alexander Tueros, 22, with misdemeanor child abuse. It wasn’t indicated whether the child was related to Tueros.

### Patrol: Woman attacked trooper at rest station

**ND** ORISKA — A 35-year-old woman faces numerous charges after allegedly assaulting a trooper before two citizens assisted in the arrest, the North Dakota Highway Patrol said.

The trooper had responded to a report of a reckless driver and located the car at the Oriska rest area. The vehicle was parked and running and the driver appeared to be passed out, the patrol said.

The patrol said the driver appeared to be under the influence of methamphetamine and she refused orders to exit the vehicle. As the trooper attempted to get her out of the car, she started driving in reverse and dragging the officer.

The trooper was able to put

the vehicle in park, at which time she attempted to disarm the trooper. Two bystanders helped remove the driver and she was handcuffed, authorities said.

### Work continues to keep seabirds off power lines

**HI** LIHUE — Kauai utility officials are installing glow-in-the-dark devices to prevent endangered nocturnal seabirds from crashing into power lines on the Hawaiian island.

The diverters help Newell’s shearwater, Hawaiian petrel and band-rumped storm petrel avoid power lines after dark.

Kauai is considered an important breeding habitat for all of those species.

The Kauai Island Utility Cooperative installed diverters on 109 power line spans last year and expects to install diverters on another 628 spans by the end of 2021, The Garden Island reported.

### Police chase briefly crosses bike race path

**IA** DES MOINES — A police chase briefly crossed an Iowa bike race’s path, according to law enforcement.

The chase started after a state trooper tried to pull over a driver in northwestern Iowa’s Buena Vista County, The Des Moines Register reported.

Iowa State Patrol Sgt. Alex Dinkla told the newspaper that the driver took off on a gravel road after the trooper smelled marijuana in the car. The driver briefly crossed the Register’s Annual Great Bicycle Ride

Across Iowa route as it fled.

Another trooper set a trap to deflate the car’s tires, which caused the car to flip and hit a tree in front of a home.

The driver bailed before the car rolled and was arrested, Dinkla said.

### Man found walking on runway faces charges

**ME** BANGOR — A Maine man who strolled onto the runway at Bangor International Airport faces charges, officials said.

Planes were taxiing at the time the man was spotted on the runway. The man ran when officials tried to stop him, scaled a fence and disappeared into the woods before being arrested later, officials said.

The man was charged with trespassing, refusing to submit to arrest and with violation of conditions of release for a previous bail, the Bangor Daily News reported.

### Man trying to kill skunk fatally struck by arrow

**NY** TAYLOR — A man was fatally shot with a crossbow as he and another man were trying to kill a skunk in upstate New York, police said.

James R. Parker Jr., 58, was struck with an arrow from a crossbow in the central New York town of Taylor, state police said.

Investigators believe Parker and another man were trying to kill a skunk outside of a home when the other man unintentionally hit Parker with an arrow, police said.

— From wire reports

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# Mental health takes center stage in Tokyo

Associated Press

TOKYO — For decades, they were told to shake it off or toughen up — to set aside the doubt, or the demons, and focus on the task at hand: winning. Dominating. Getting it done.

For years, Simone Biles was one of the very best at that. Suddenly — to some, shockingly — she decided she wasn't in the right headspace.

By pulling on her white sweatsuit in the middle of Tuesday night's Olympic gymnastics meet, and by doing it with a gold medal hanging in the balance, Biles might very well have redefined the mental health discussion that's been coursing through sports for the past year.

On Wednesday, she pulled out of the all-around competition to focus on her mental well-being.

Michael Phelps, winner of a record 23 gold medals and now retired, has long been open about his own mental health struggles. Phelps has said he contemplated suicide after the 2012 Olympics while wracked with depression. Now an analyst for NBC's swimming coverage, he said watching Biles struggle "broke my heart."

"Mental health over the last 18 months is something people are talking about," Phelps said. "We're human beings. Nobody is perfect. So, yes, it is OK not to be OK."

Biles joins some other high-profile athletes in the Olympic space — overwhelmingly females — who have been talking openly about a topic that had been taboo in sports for seemingly forever.

■ Tennis player Naomi Osaka withdrew from the French Open, never went to Wimbledon and, after her early exit in Tokyo this week, conceded that the Olympic cauldron was a bit too much to handle.

■ American sprinter Sha'Carri Richardson made no secret of the issues she faced as she prepared for an Olympic journey that never happened. She said she used marijuana to help mask the pain of her birth

mother's death, to say nothing of the pressure of the 100 meters.

■ Dutch cyclist Tom Dumoulin left training camp in January to clear his head, saying he was finding it "very difficult for me to know how to find my way as Tom Dumoulin the cyclist." He resumed training in May; on Wednesday, he won a silver medal in the men's individual time trials.

■ Liz Cambage, a WNBA player who competes for Australia, pulled out of the Olympics a week before they opened because of anxiety over entering a controlled COVID bubble in Tokyo that would have kept her friends and family away.

## US women win 3-on-3 basketball goal medal

Associated Press

TOKYO — Their scrapbooks and trophy cases are filled with memories from Final Fours, national titles, All-America honors and even some impressive showings in the pros.

Now, they have Olympic gold medals to go with all that.

The U.S. team of Stefanie Dolson, Allisha Gray, Kelsey Plum and Jackie Young took an early lead against the team from Russia, then held on for an 18-15 victory Wednesday to win the title in the debut of 3-on-3 basketball at the Olympics.

"In 10 years, we'll look back and say 'Damn, we did that,'" Dolson said. "Hopefully we started something."

Dolson did the honors during the medals ceremony, taking the gold prizes and placing them over her teammates' necks. They stood with hands over hearts during the national anthem.

Their celebration couldn't beat Latvia's, though.

After Karlis Lasmanis drained a shot from behind the

arc to close out the men's final, he found himself at the bottom of a four-man dogpile. The game-winner gave his country a 21-18 victory over the Russians and its first medal of the Games.

Bronze medals went to China's women and Serbia's men.

Much as they did in the final, the Americans dominated through most of the five-day tournament. They played nine games and lost only one.

Plum, who became the all-time leading scorer in NCAA history during her four years at Washington, led the way in this event, as well. She scored 55 points over the nine games. In the final, she scored all five of her points early to stake the U.S. to a lead it never relinquished.

"I didn't think this was going to happen," said the guard, who suffered an Achilles injury last year and has been on a long road back. "I didn't think it was in the cards with my Achilles. And for Lou to get COVID and Jackie to come in. So many things. This group kept dealing with it."

## Japan's Hashimoto takes all-around gymnastics title

Associated Press

TOKYO — Daiki Hashimoto grew up watching Kohei Uchimura win gold medals, just like every other aspiring Japanese gymnast over the past decade-plus.

Yet the idea of carrying on the legacy Uchimura built during his gold medal-laden career hardly bothers the 19-year-old Hashimoto.

In fact, he's embracing it.

Hashimoto gave Japan its third straight Olympic title in the men's all-around on Wednesday night, using a thrilling high-bar routine during the final rotation to slip past China's Xiao Ruoteng and ROC's Nikita Nagornyy for gold.

Hashimoto's total of 88.465 was four-tenths ahead of Ruoteng, who was dinged a three-tenths deduction after forgetting to salute the judges during the final set.

It ultimately didn't matter. Hashimoto is developing a reputation as one of the best high bar performers in the world. His brilliant set in the team fi-

nal nearly allowed Japan to nip the team representing the Russian Olympic Committee for gold.

There was no uncertainty this time. Nagornyy approached Hashimoto before Hashimoto stepped onto the podium and told the young phenom to go do his thing.

A series of intricate releases followed before Hashimoto finished with a drilled dismount and a roar from the members of the Japanese federation and assorted volunteers sprinkled throughout the Ariake Gymnastics Centre. A few feet away, China's Xiao nodded, well aware his total of 88.065 wasn't going to stand.

Hashimoto's second near-flawless set in three days looked so easy it was difficult to remember this was an Olympic final and not some random Wednesday night in the gym.

"I didn't feel any pressure or nervousness," Hashimoto said through a translator. "I just tried to enjoy the competition with (myself)."



# Deck sprints prepped Navy officer for Tokyo

*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — A Navy officer who trained for the Olympics by sprinting across the deck of a warship on patrol in the Atlantic Ocean is set to race the world's fastest women over 100 meters in Japan.

Ensign Regine Tugade-Watson, 23, who graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in May 2020, will run for the U.S. territory of Guam, which is sending its own contingent to this month's games.

The 115-pound, 5-foot-11 speedster, who competed for the U.S. territory at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, deployed as a surface warfare officer on the amphibious-assault ship USS Iwo Jima in March, but she didn't use that as an excuse to slacken her training.

"Before I got on the ship, I didn't know how conducive to sprint training it would be, but the flat deck was perfect," she told *Stars and Stripes* by phone July 16.

The Iwo Jima and its amphibious ready group took part in exercises this month in the Gulf of Aden with strike groups led by aircraft carriers HMS Queen Elizabeth from the United Kingdom and the USS Ronald Reagan.

The Iwo Jima's flight deck, more than 800

feet long, accommodates AV-8B Harriers and a fleet of Marine helicopters. It also provided more than enough space to run, Tugade-Watson said.

Sprinting isn't a favored exercise for most sailors and Marines at sea, but plenty of them run laps on the deck to stay in shape, she said.

Ocean swells and a moving deck didn't impact her sprint training on the Iwo Jima, but the sea breeze could be an issue at times, Tugade-Watson said.

"I'm not about to sprint on the flight deck in 30-knot wind," she said.

Even before the deployment, Tugade-Watson had to juggle her track and gym time with military training.

Coaches spotted Tugade-Watson's natural ability early, according to Guam Track and Field Association president Derek Mandell.

In middle school she was already out-sprinting much older girls. By the time she was a senior at John F. Kennedy High School, she was breaking records. Tugade-Watson, with a personal best of 11.92 seconds, is the first woman from the island to break the 12-second mark at 100 meters, Mandell said in a telephone interview Tuesday.

"She has natural talent, but she has worked incredibly hard," he said.

Guam has a vibrant sports scene, but it can be challenging for young athletes competing on an island with only four high school running tracks, he said.

Tugade-Watson, who also played volleyball and basketball at school, recalled competing against runners from Andersen Air Force Base on Guam and Department of Defense high schools on Okinawa.

At the Naval Academy, she ran against Division I college athletes. She was "really bummed" to hear that one of her rivals, Sha'Carri Richardson, wouldn't be in Tokyo with Team USA after testing positive for marijuana.

One runner who will be there is Jamaican Shelley-Ann Fraser-Pryce, the world's fastest woman, who clocked 10.71 seconds in a recent race. The women's 100-meter heats are slated for Friday.

"When I'm sprinting, there's not much that goes through my head because it is so quick," she said. "The way you race is a direct result of how much work you put in."

The young officer said she's honored to be part of the Guam team at the Olympics.

"I'm just representing and going out here and seeing what I can do," she said.

## Ledecky wins gold in 1,500; her 3rd try this Olympics

*Associated Press*

TOKYO — When Katie Ledecky finally saw that familiar number next to her name, the emotions flooded to the surface at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

She tumbled over the lane rope to give her runner-up teammate a hug. She let out an uncharacteristic scream toward the American cheering section in the mostly empty arena. Finally, as the tears seemed ready to flow, she pulled the goggles back down over her eyes before exiting the pool.

On her third try at these Olympics, Ledecky finally touched first.

Bouncing back from the worst finish of her brilliant Olympic career, Ledecky claimed the first-ever gold medal in the women's 1,500-meter freestyle Wednesday.

About an hour earlier, she was blown away by Australia's Termi-

nator, Ariarne Titmus, who made it 2-for-2 in their rivalry with a victory in the 200 free.

Ledecky didn't even win a medal — the first time that's ever happened to her in an Olympic race. She was far behind all the way, never getting any higher than her fifth-place finish.

"After the 200, I knew I had to turn the page very quickly," Ledecky said. "In the warm-down pool I was thinking of my family. Kind of each stroke I was thinking of my grandparents."

Her voice choked with emotion. She crunched her eyes trying not to cry.

"They're the toughest four people I know," Ledecky said, "and that's what helped me get through that."

The metric mile wasn't quite the breeze that everyone expected, given Ledecky's longtime dominance in an event that was fi-

nally added to the Olympic program for these games. She built a big lead right from the start, then worked hard to hold off American teammate Erica Sullivan's blazing finish.

But it was Ledecky touching first in 15 minutes, 37.39 seconds. Sullivan claimed the silver (15:41.41), while the bronze went to Germany's Sarah Kohler (15:42.91).

"I think people maybe feel bad for me that I'm not winning everything and whatever, but I want people to be more concerned about other things going on in the world, people that are truly suffering," Ledecky said. "I'm just proud to bring home a gold medal to Team USA."

Also winning on a busy day at the pool:

■ Britain captured its first gold medal in the men's 4x200 freestyle relay since 1908, blow-

ing away the field with a powerhouse group that included the top two finishers in the 200 free individual race, Tom Dean and Duncan Scott. The Americans failed to win a medal in the relay for the first time other than the boycotted Moscow Games in 1980.

■ Japan's Yui Ohashi completed her sweep of the women's individual medley with a victory in the 400, holding off a pair of American teenagers.

■ Kristof Milak of Hungary romped to a dominating — but rather nerve-wracking — victory in the men's 200 butterfly after hastily changing out a torn suit just before the race.

Titmus secured her place as one of the game's biggest stars and gave the Australian women their third individual swimming gold with an Olympic record of 1:53.50, adding to her thrilling triumph in the 400 free.

# Braves slugger Riley drives in 6 runs

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Austin Riley hit a grand slam and a two-run homer to set a career high with six RBIs, powering the Atlanta Braves to a 12-5 rout of the New York Mets on Tuesday night.

Ozzie Albies and Abraham Almonte also had two-run homers for the Braves, who have won two of the first three in a five-game series as they chase the first-place Mets in the NL East. Dansby Swanson delivered a two-run double in the first inning to get Atlanta started.

Charlie Morton (10-3) allowed three runs and five hits with five strikeouts over five innings.

Mets spot starter Jerad Eickhoff (0-2) gave up 10 runs on seven hits and five walks in 3½ innings. Jeff McNeil and Brandon Drury each hit a two-run homer for the Mets after they trailed 10-1 in the fourth.

**Giants 2, Dodgers 1:** Buster

Posey scored the tiebreaking run on a throwing error by first baseman Cody Bellinger in the eighth inning, and host San Francisco beat Los Angeles, increasing its lead over the Dodgers in the NL West to three games.

**Padres 7, Athletics 4:** Fernando Tatis Jr. hit a monster 440-foot, two-run homer, Manny Machado added a three-run shot and Adam Frazier had two hits and two runs in his debut for San Diego in a win over visiting Oakland.

**Nationals 6, Phillies 4:** Trea Turner singled in the first inning and scored on Josh Bell's three-run homer that put Washington ahead to stay, but was then pulled from the victory at Philadelphia because of a positive COVID-19 test.

**Yankees 4, Rays 3:** Jordan Montgomery stopped an eight-start winless streak, Aaron Judge singled in his return from COVID-19 and New York

won at Tampa Bay.

**Cardinals 4, Indians 2:** Adam Wainwright won in his first appearance at Progressive Field, Paul DeJong hit a go-ahead homer and St. Louis won at Cleveland.

**Brewers 9, Pirates 0:** Omar Narvaez homered and had four RBIs, Brett Anderson pitched six strong innings and Milwaukee scored eight runs in the first two innings to win at Pittsburgh.

**Marlins 7, Orioles 3:** Sandy León hit a three-run homer in the second inning and Sandy Alcantara pitched into the seventh, helping Miami win at Baltimore.

**White Sox 5, Royals 3:** Eloy Jiménez logged his first big hit of the season, launching a go-ahead, three-run homer in the eighth inning that sent Chicago to a win at Kansas City.

**Rangers 5, Diamondbacks 4:** All-Star slugger Joey Gallo hit a three-run homer and had

two assists from right field as Texas snapped a 12-game losing streak with a win over visiting Arizona.

**Reds 7, Cubs 4:** Joey Votto continued his power surge with two home runs and started a dazzling double play as Cincinnati won at Chicago.

**Tigers 6, Twins 5 (11):** Miguel Cabrera hit a run-scoring single in the 11th inning after Eric Haase tied the game with a grand slam with one out in the top of the ninth as Detroit snapped a four-game skid with a win at Minnesota.

**Rockies 12, Angels 3:** Shohei Ohtani hit his major league-leading 36th home run, one of the few highlights for host Los Angeles in a loss to Colorado.

**Astros 8, Mariners 6:** Abraham Toro homered for Seattle against the team that traded him across the diamond during batting practice, but visiting Houston held off a ninth-inning rally to win.

## US men's basketball rebounds, routs Iran

Associated Press

SAITAMA, Japan — It wasn't just that the United States had been losing. It was that the level of play was practically un-American.

Playing passively and passing up open shots isn't the way its players became basketball's best. And when it resulted in them dropping their Olympic opener, the Americans decided to do something about it.

"After that loss we came together," guard Damian Lillard said. "It was a lot of communication between then and now where it's like, 'All right. It's time to start looking like Team USA.'"

Lillard scored 21 points and the Americans got back to winning — and winning easily — with their

first victory of these Olympics, romping past Iran 120-66 on Wednesday.

Devin Booker scored 16 points and Jayson Tatum had 14 for the Americans, who had their 25-game Olympic winning streak snapped with an 83-76 loss to France on Sunday.

The U.S. not only bounced back, but did it in a Dream Team-type performance against an overmatched opponent, racing out for transition dunks and stepping back to knock down three-pointers.

"We came out with more freedom as individuals and took the shots that we normally take," said Kevin Durant. "And they went in tonight and we guarded up, so it was a good step."

## Golden Knights trade Fleury to Blackhawks

Associated Press

Marc-Andre Fleury was traded from Vegas to Chicago on Tuesday, a stunning turn of events that has the NHL's reigning Vezina Trophy-winning goaltender contemplating his future.

The Golden Knights traded Fleury to the Blackhawks for minor league forward Mikael Hakkarainen in a salary dump. Fleury is set to count \$7 million against the cap next season, the final year of his contract.

And that's if he reports at all. Agent Allan Walsh tweeted, "Marc-Andre will be taking time to discuss his situation with his family and seriously evaluate his hockey future at

this time."

Golden Knights general manager Kelly McCrimmon knew Fleury "wanted to play in Vegas."

"With respect to what decisions he might make moving forward, this is a player who is at the very top of his game," McCrimmon said during a video call with reporters. "I sure think he'll play this year. But those are things that I would leave he or others to speak about."

Fleury, 36, did not have Chicago on his 10-team no-trade list, but did not want to be traded at all. Chicago is certainly hoping to add him as the organization shifts from a rebuild into win-now mode.