

## Records shed light on US soldier in N. Korea

By **DAVID CHOI**  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The American soldier who ran into North Korea had been scheduled to fly to Texas to face disciplinary action after six weeks in a South Korean prison but slipped away from an airport near Seoul and made his way to the heavily fortified border, South Korean media and officials reported.

U.S. Forces Korea and the American-led United Nations Command offered no new details about the Tuesday incident.

South Korean court records detailed the offenses that had put him in jail.

Army Pvt. Travis King, 23, pleaded guilty to assaulting several people in October in Mapo, a popular nightclub district in Seoul, according to a trial summary.

On July 10, he left a prison in Cheonan city, 53 miles south of Seoul, specifically designed to hold foreign inmates, a corrections facility official told Stars and Stripes by phone Tuesday.

King apparently walked out of Incheon International Airport on Monday after passing through security but before boarding a flight to Fort Bliss, Texas, where he could have faced further disciplinary action by the Army, according to The Associated Press.

A day later, King left a U.N. Command-

sponsored tour group and crossed the heavily guarded border at the Joint Security Area in the Demilitarized Zone, where the 1953 truce suspending the Korean War was signed, and is presumably in North Korean custody, according to the Army.

“We’re closely monitoring and investigating the situation,” U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said at a Pentagon press conference Tuesday, noting he was foremost concerned about the soldier’s well-being. “This will develop in the next several days and hours, and we’ll keep you posted.”

USFK did not respond to requests for further information Wednesday. A U.N. Command spokesman, Australian army Maj. Christopher Rickey, provided no new details.

“If and when the decision is made to release additional information, we will let you know,” he told Stars and Stripes in an email.

Seoul police arrested King just before 4 a.m. on Oct. 8 in Mapo and placed him in the back seat of a squad car, according to records from Seoul Western District Court. He refused to answer questions, kicked the car’s doors and ranted: “F— Korean, f— Korean Army, f— Korean police.”

The court records redact the names of victims and the defendant, but a court official on Tuesday confirmed by phone that King was

the defendant in the case.

He was also fined about \$3,950 and paid roughly \$790 for damage to the police car, the records state.

King joined the Army in January 2021 and was a cavalry scout administratively assigned to the 4th Infantry Division in South Korea, according to Pentagon spokesman Bryce Dube.

King was also accused of assault on Sept. 25, according to court records. Seoul police said he pushed and punched a fellow customer at a Mapo bar who refused to buy King a drink, records state.

South Korean officials regularly speak to the media on the customary condition of anonymity. South Korean law protects the identity of the accused unless in extreme cases of “cruel” crimes, such as homicide.

King faced disciplinary actions from the military and was in the process of being discharged.

Military police escorting King were not allowed to enter a security checkpoint at the airport, the Korea Times reported Tuesday. Once alone, King reportedly told an airline official he had lost his passport and was led out to the departure gate with an employee.

U.N. Command is working with its North Korean counterparts to resolve the incident, it said Tuesday on Twitter.

## Russian strikes on Odesa port imperil grain exports

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia unleashed intense drone and missile attacks overnight Wednesday, damaging critical port infrastructure in southern Ukraine, including grain and oil terminals, officials said.

The bombardment crippled significant parts of export facilities in Odesa and nearby Chornomorsk and destroyed 60,000 tons of grain, according to Ukraine’s Agriculture Ministry.

It came days after President Vladimir Putin pulled Russia out of its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative, a wartime deal that enabled Ukraine’s exports to reach many countries facing the threat of hunger.

It also followed a vow by Putin to retaliate against Kyiv for an attack Monday on the

crucial Kerch Bridge linking Russia with the Crimean Peninsula, which the Kremlin illegally annexed in 2014.

Putin said Wednesday that Russia could return to the deal if the West offers Russian banks involved in servicing payments for the country’s agricultural exports immediate access to the SWIFT payment system, adding that Moscow wants action, not “ideas.”

Further raising the stakes, the Russian Defense Ministry issued a statement that Moscow has declared international waters in northwestern and southeastern parts of the Black Sea “temporarily dangerous” for shipping. That follows Ukraine’s pledge to continue grain shipments despite the Russian pullout from the deal.

The ministry warned it will see any incoming vessel as laden with military cargo starting from midnight. “The countries whose flags those ships will fly will be seen as involved in the Ukrainian conflict on the side of the Kyiv regime,” it said.

Ukraine’s Agriculture Ministry, citing experts, estimated it would take a year to restore the facilities damaged Wednesday. The destroyed grain was supposed to have been loaded onto a vessel and sent through the grain corridor two months ago, the statement said.

“Such attacks by Russian terrorists are not only affecting our country but also global stability,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said during a briefing with the visiting Irish prime minister in Kyiv.

# Groups seek to halt habitat loss in Guam

BY JOSEPH DITZLER

*Stars and Stripes*

Environmental advocacy groups filed suit Tuesday seeking to force the Navy, Defense Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect endangered species on Guam from development of the Marine Corps' newest installation, Camp Blaz.

The Navy and Fish and Wildlife Service failed "to protect and conserve more than a dozen endangered and threatened species at imminent risk of extinction on Guam," according to a lawsuit filed Tuesday in U.S. District Court on Guam by the Center for Biological Diversity and Prutehi Litekyan: Save Ritidian.

The environmental groups seek a court order forcing the Navy to mitigate construction damage and reinstate consultations with the Fish and Wildlife Service to protect Guam's endangered plants and animals.

The Marines opened Blaz in January behind a requirement to mitigate damage to endangered species there when hundreds of forested acres were cleared for the base, according to the lawsuit.

The Fish and Wildlife Service in 2015 and 2017 outlined measures for the Navy under

the Endangered Species Act to offset construction of Blaz against conservation of habitat for endangered plants and animals, said Maxx Phillips, a lawyer for the Center for Biological Diversity in Honolulu, by phone on Wednesday.

For example, the military was supposed to move 140 plants crucial to the life cycle of the endangered Mariana eight-spot butterfly but never did, and the butterfly is struggling as a result, she said.

The lawsuit claims construction at Camp Blaz destroyed 1,200 acres of Guam's "last remaining" limestone forest and "is causing great harm to Guam's endangered plants and animals including some of the most imperiled species in the world."

Bulldozers took out acres of limestone forest, a unique ecosystem on Guam that harbors several endangered species, although an equal area of forest will be restored elsewhere, Adrienne Loerzel, Blaz's forest enhancement program manager, said in April.

Phillips said a site visit to Blaz with a Navy escort showed the tree restoration project was failing so far.

Camp Blaz took out an area previously

designated part of the Guam National Wildlife Refuge and set aside to mitigate habitat lost to Andersen Air Force Base, according to a news release from the center Tuesday.

"It's hard to understand why these culturally sensitive and ecologically sensitive areas were chosen for this development," Phillips said.

Construction of the base Firing Range Complex at a place called Ritidian or Litekyan, is "devastating the once-pristine, biodiverse ecosystem" there, "one of the most ecologically and culturally sensitive places on Guam," the 104-page lawsuit stated.

A spokeswoman for Camp Blaz, Maj. Diann Rosenfeld, could not be reached by phone or email Wednesday for comment.

Guam figures prominently in U.S. strategy to offset the challenge presented by China's growing military. The U.S. island territory south of Japan and east of the Philippines provides a power-projection and logistics platform in the western Pacific.

Camp Blaz is the first new Marine Corps installation since 1952 and covers 4,000 acres. About 5,000 Marines are expected to live and work at the base, along with family members.

## Defense secretary urges Tuberville to end stall tactic

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

*Stars and Stripes*

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Tuesday told reporters that he expects America's enemies were pleased with the procedural block on top military promotions orchestrated by Sen. Tommy Tuberville in protest of a Pentagon policy that covers travel costs for abortions.

Austin implored the Alabama Republican to drop his hold on a procedural vote to confirm more than 260 general and admiral promotions, telling reporters in a Pentagon news conference that it had become a combat "readiness issue." The defense secretary also defended his policy, which allows the Pentagon to reimburse service members for out-of-state travel

expenses for certain reproductive health care, including abortions, which have been banned in some parts of the United States.

"The fact that Sen. Tuberville maintains this hold on our senior officers — it cascades and it creates friction through the entire chain [of command.] It disadvantages families," Austin told reporters during a briefing that followed a meeting on efforts to bolster Ukraine in its ongoing fight against invading Russian forces. "And, so I would ask Sen. Tuberville to lift this hold, and if you think about it, I would imagine our adversaries would look at something like this and be pretty happy that that we create this kind of turbulence [and] put that on our force."

Tuberville has repeatedly maintained Austin's policy is illegal because it violates the Hyde Amendment, which bans any federal funding for abortions. A spokesman for Tuberville declined to comment Tuesday.

Austin and Tuberville spoke by phone about the issue on July 13, but the pair reached no consensus on the issue, according to the Pentagon.

Austin on Tuesday defended his policy as legal and backed by the Justice Department because it only pays travel expenses and permits troops to use their leave to seek medical care. He said the Pentagon owed its troops the opportunity to make health care choices for their families, including seeking abortions or other proce-

dures such as in vitro fertilization.

One in five U.S. troops are women, Austin said. Thousands of those women — and the female spouses of service members — are stationed in states that have essentially banned abortion access since the Supreme Court last year repealed abortion protections formerly granted by the Roe v. Wade decision.

"They don't get a chance to pick where they're assigned," Austin said. "They're serving their country, they're sacrificing each and every day, and they deserve, in my view [and] in the view of our leadership, they deserve to have access to non-covered reproductive health care. And that's what this policy does."

# 16 fake electors for Trump charged in Mich.

Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan's attorney general filed felony charges Tuesday against 16 Republicans who acted as fake electors for then-President Donald Trump in 2020, accusing them of submitting false certificates that confirmed they were legitimate electors despite Joe Biden's victory in the state.

Attorney General Dana Nessel, a Democrat, announced Tuesday that all 16 people would face eight criminal charges, including forgery and conspiracy to commit election forgery. The top charges carry a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison.

The group includes the head of the Republican National Committee's chapter in Michigan, Kathy Berden, as well as the for-

mer co-chair of the Michigan Republican Party, Meshawn Maddock, and Shelby Township Clerk Stan Grot.

In seven battleground states, including Michigan, supporters of Trump signed certificates that falsely stated he won their states, not Biden. The fake certificates were ignored, but the attempt has been subject to investigations, including by the House committee that investigated the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

"The false electors' actions undermined the public's faith in the integrity of our elections and, we believe, also plainly violated the laws by which we administer our elections in Michigan," Nessel said in a statement.

The 16 individuals are set to appear for arraignment in Ingham

County at a date provided to each by the court, according to Nessel's office. Phone and email messages seeking comment Tuesday from several of the people charged were not immediately returned.

One of those charged, John Haggard, 82, of Charlevoix, told The Detroit News on Tuesday that he didn't believe he did anything wrong.

"Did I do anything illegal? No," Haggard said.

GOP state Sen. Ed McBroom, who chaired a GOP-led Senate panel to investigate Michigan's 2020 presidential election that found no wrongdoing, said he previously spoke with one of the fake electors. It was clear, McBroom said, that the effort was organized by "people who put themselves in a position of authority and posing

themselves as the ones who knew what they were doing."

"They were wrong," McBroom told The Associated Press. "And other people followed them when they shouldn't have."

Berden and Mayra Rodriguez, a Michigan lawyer who was also charged Tuesday, were both questioned by congressional investigators as part of the U.S. House panel's investigation into the Jan. 6 insurrection.

In January of last year, Nessel asked federal prosecutors to open a criminal investigation into the 16 Republicans.

"Obviously this is part of a much bigger conspiracy," she said at the time.

Electors are people appointed to represent voters in presidential elections.

## Judge signals Dec. may be too soon for Trump trial

Associated Press

FORT PIERCE, Fla. — A federal judge signaled Tuesday that December may be too soon to begin former President Donald Trump's landmark criminal trial concerning the mishandling of classified documents, but did not say whether she would agree to Trump's request to put the trial off until after the 2024 election.

Judge Aileen Cannon said she would issue a written order "promptly" after the nearly two-hour hearing in federal court in Fort Pierce, Fla., where Trump's lawyers pressed for an indefinite delay of a trial date.

The sparring over setting a trial date, a routine matter in criminal cases, underscores the unprecedented nature of prosecuting a former president who is also running to reclaim the White House in 2024. Trump has denied any wrongdoing and slammed the prosecution as an attempt to hurt his campaign.

Trump's lawyers have said the Republican can't get a fair trial

ahead of the election and have insisted they need more time to review evidence and prepare for what they have described as a complex case.

The judge repeatedly pressed Trump's lawyers to set some dates and a more concrete timetable, but acknowledged she understood they needed more time to review documents and footage.

"We need to set a timetable," Cannon said. "Some deadlines can be established now."

She also questioned prosecutors on whether there were other similar cases involving classified documents tried in such a short time frame.

Special counsel Jack Smith's team, which is pushing for the trial to begin in December, told the judge the case is not complex and that there's no need for a lengthy delay. They rejected insinuations by the defense that Trump was charged because he's running for president. Prosecutor David Harbach said there was "no political influence."

## House reacts to remarks, passes pro-Israel measure

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House on Tuesday passed a Republican-led resolution reaffirming its support for Israel with strong bipartisan approval — an implicit rebuke of a leading Democrat who, over the weekend, called the country a "racist state" but later apologized.

The resolution, introduced by Rep. August Pfluger, R-Texas, passed with over 400 lawmakers backing the measure. It did not mention Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., by name, but was clearly a response to her recent remarks about the Jewish state. The measure was drafted soon after she criticized Israel and its treatment of Palestinians at a conference on Saturday.

Jayapal, the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, also voted in support of the resolution. "I am not going to be bullied by their political games, and I'm not going to let them try to continue this debate," she told reporters after the vote.

The Washington Democrat had walked back her comments from over the weekend, insisting they were aimed at Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and not the Jewish state.

"I do not believe the idea of Israel as a nation is racist," Jayapal said in a statement Sunday. "I do, however, believe that Netanyahu's extreme right-wing government has engaged in discriminatory and outright racist policies and that there are extreme racists driving that policy within the leadership of the current government."

The GOP-led effort highlighted the divide among House Democrats over Israel, with younger progressives adopting a more critical stance toward the long-time U.S. ally than party leaders.

Some progressive Democrats were vowing to boycott Wednesday when Israeli President Isaac Herzog is slated to address a joint session of Congress in commemoration of Israel's 75th anniversary.



# More rain forecast for waterlogged areas in US

*Associated Press*

MAYFIELD, Ky. — High-water rescue crews pulled people from flooded homes and vehicles in Kentucky on Wednesday, where waves of thunderstorms prompted flash flood warnings and watches. A search continued for two children swept away after torrential rains in the northeast.

The National Weather Service estimated that as much as 10 inches of rain could fall in the area where Kentucky, Illinois and Missouri meet at the convergence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers.

Atmospheric scientists say the global warming responsible for unrelenting heat in the Southwest also is making this kind of extreme rainfall a more frequent reality, because clouds hold more moisture as the temperature rises, resulting in more destructive storms.

There were several reports of people being rescued from high water surrounding homes and vehicles in the Mayfield and Wingo areas early Wednesday, according to Keith Cooley, a senior forecaster with the weather service in Paducah,

Ky.

He called it a “life-threatening situation” because so much rain fell in such a short time.

Mayfield was especially hard hit by storms that produced deadly tornadoes in December 2021.

In Connecticut, a woman died after being swept down a swollen river Tuesday with her 5-year-old daughter. State Fire officials say the pair were swimming in the Shetucket River in Sprague when they were swept away by currents that have been running high because of the recent heavy rains in New England.

They were found unconscious downstream and taken to a local hospital, where the mother, a woman in her 30s, died. Fire officials say the daughter was stabilized at a local hospital and is expected to survive.

And in Pennsylvania, searchers are still trying to find two children visiting from South Carolina who were swept away in what one fire chief called “a wall of water” that hit their family and killed their mother Saturday. Four other people also died in those flash floods.

## DEA No. 2 quits amid reports of previous work for Big Pharma

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration’s second-in-command has quietly stepped down amid reporting by The Associated Press that he once consulted for a pharmaceutical distributor sanctioned for a deluge of suspicious painkiller shipments and did similar work for the drugmaker that became the face of the opioid epidemic: Purdue Pharma.

Louis Milione’s four years of consulting for Big Pharma preceded his 2021 return to the DEA to serve as Administrator Anne Milgram’s top deputy, renewing concerns in the agency and beyond about the revolving door between government and industry and its potential impact on the DEA’s mission to police drug companies blamed for tens of thousands of American overdose deaths.

Milione initially left the DEA in 2017 after a 21-year career that included a two-year stint leading the division that controls the sale of highly addictive narcotics. Like dozens of colleagues in the DEA’s Office of Diversion Control, he went to work as a consultant for some of the same companies he had been tasked with regulating.

AP reported in May that Milione’s consulting included testifying on behalf of the nation’s fourth-largest wholesale drug distributor, Morris & Dickson, as it fought to save its license to supply painkillers to hospitals and pharmacies. A federal administrative judge determined four years ago that the Louisiana-based company failed to flag thousands of suspicious orders at the height of the opioid crisis but the DEA didn’t move to strip the license until days after the AP inquired about the case.

New reporting has found that during his time in the private sector, Milione also served as a \$600-per-hour expert for Purdue Pharma as it fought legal challenges from Ohio to Oklahoma over its aggressive marketing of OxyContin and other highly addictive painkillers. Milione left the DEA again in late June just four days after AP sought comment from the Justice Department about his prior work for Purdue.

Milione said in a statement that he stepped down for personal reasons unrelated to AP’s reporting.

## Texas women ask court for clarity on some abortion ban exceptions

*Associated Press*

AUSTIN, Texas — Women who sued Texas after saying they were denied abortions despite serious risks to their health are headed to court Wednesday as legal challenges to abortion bans across the U.S. continue a year after the fall of *Roe v. Wade*.

The Texas case is believed to be the first brought by women who were denied abortions since the right to an abortion in the U.S. was overturned, according to the Center for Reproductive Rights, which is representing them.

The case before a Texas judge in Austin does not seek to reverse the state’s abortion ban, which is one of the strictest in the country. It instead asks the court for clarity on when exceptions are allowed in Texas, where the women say they were told they could not end their pregnancies even

though their lives and health were in danger.

One woman had to carry her baby, who was missing much of her skull, for months, knowing she’d bury her daughter soon after she was born.

Others had to travel out of state to receive medical care for pregnancy-related complications after doctors recommended an abortion.

Texas doctors who perform abortions risk life in prison and fines of up to \$100,000, leaving many women with providers who are unwilling to even discuss terminating a pregnancy.

“Even if they provide an abortion that they believe complies with the bans’ narrow exceptions, they still risk the laws being enforced against them,” the plaintiffs argued in court filings this month.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## 5 people hurt when SUV crashes into restaurant

**IL** HINSDALE — An SUV crashed into a restaurant in suburban Chicago on Monday, critically injuring a teenager and causing four other people to be hurt, authorities said.

A 14-year-old boy was outside the restaurant when he was struck by the SUV, which then collided with the wall of Fontano's Subs in Hinsdale around 2:30 p.m., news outlets reported. The teen was taken to Hinsdale Hospital and then later flown to Comer Children's Hospital at the University of Chicago, authorities said.

Three other people inside the restaurant also were struck by the SUV or debris and were taken to a hospital in serious condition, authorities said. A fourth person was treated and released at the scene for minor injuries.

## Police ID man who died after Taser used on him

**MO** ST. LOUIS — Police said 31-year-old Andrew Harrington died after being shocked at least twice with a Taser by a St. Louis police officer.

The officer who used a Taser on Harrington is a 27-year-old, four-year veteran of the department, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported. Police did not identify the officer.

Police were called Thursday night to a home for reports of a person being violent toward emergency medical workers. Police said arriving officers found Harrington naked and disoriented behind a home.

When officers ordered Har-

ington to come toward them, he tripped and fell into a fence, police said. Two of the five officers who were there picked him up and tried to handcuff him, but he slipped away and fell again, according to police. Police said an officer then used a Taser to subdue Harrington.

## Mayor faces pressure to resign or meet demands

**MN** OWATONNA — Members of an LGBTQ+ group are calling on the mayor of a southern Minnesota city to meet their demands — or resign — after he asked pastors at a church holding a Pride event if there would be stripper poles in the sanctuary and posted a public prayer alluding to “sin and brokenness” at the event.

In an open letter to Mayor Tom Kuntz, a Republican, and the Owatonna City Council, Rainbowatonna organizer Nathan Black said Kuntz used his elected position to harass and intimidate people involved in the city's Pride celebration on July 8, the Star Tribune reported.

The Pride celebration included a service at Associated Church, festivities at a pavilion and a drag show after-party at the Owatonna Arts Center. In his public letter, Black said Kuntz spoke to pastors at the church about two weeks before the service. He said the mayor appeared to be upset and asked several “bizarre” questions.

## Court denies bid to block Nevada lithium mine

**NV** RENO — The latest bid by conservationists and tribal leaders to block construction of a huge lithium

mine already in the works along the Nevada-Oregon line was denied by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Monday.

A three-panel judge of the San Francisco-based appellate court rejected a half-dozen legal arguments the opponents had put forth in their appeal seeking to overturn federal land managers' approval of one of the projects at the forefront of President Joe Biden's plans to combat climate change.

Critics claim the open-pit mine, as deep as the length of a football field, will violate multiple environmental laws and destroy lands tribal members consider sacred because they say dozens of their ancestors were massacred there in 1865.

Lithium Nevada Corp.'s mine at Thacker Pass, 200 miles northeast of Reno, has pitted environmentalists and Native Americans against Biden's efforts to accelerate the transition from fossil fuels to cleaner, renewable energy sources. The mine would involve extraction of the silvery-white metal used in electric vehicle batteries.

## Suspect in 4 slayings has prior sentence reinstated

**OR** SALEM — A man considered a person of interest in the deaths of four women whose bodies were found in northwestern Oregon is being held in a state prison after Gov. Tina Kotek reinstated a prison sentence that was commuted by her predecessor.

Jesse Lee Calhoun, 38, is considered a person of interest in the deaths of Kristin Smith, 22, Charity Lynn Perry, 24, Bridget Leann Webster, 31, and Ashley Real, 22, according to an official who requested anonymity.

The women's bodies were found in wooded areas around Portland, Ore., between February and May. Officials have not released any information about how the women died or why Calhoun is considered a person of interest in the investigation. He has not been charged.

Calhoun was serving time for a 2019 conviction on stolen vehicle and burglary charges when then-Gov. Kate Brown commuted his sentence along with the sentences of 40 other prisoners in June 2021. The inmates had all helped fight wildfires in 2020 under a prison firefighting program.

## Civil rights groups sue over new immigration law

**FL** MIAMI — Several civil rights groups filed a federal lawsuit on Monday challenging Florida's new immigration law.

The lawsuit was filed in Miami federal court against Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, Attorney General Ashley Moody and Statewide Prosecutor Nicholas B. Cox on behalf of the Farmworker Association of Florida and others, according to court records.

The legislation that DeSantis, a Republican, signed into law in May bolsters his migrant relocation program and limits social services for immigrants lacking permanent legal status. It also expands requirements for businesses with more than 25 staffers to use E-Verify, a federal system that determines if employees can legally work in the U.S. Another provision requires hospitals that accept Medicaid to include a citizenship question on intake forms.

— From wire reports

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# Braves' Acuña setting new power, speed norms

Associated Press

Ronald Acuña Jr. is on pace to do more than just join an elite 40-40 club in baseball history.

The Braves outfielder is threatening to obliterate the previous high mark for power-speed combination in a season.

Of the four players who have delivered seasons with at least 40 homers and 40 stolen bases, none accomplished the feat with more than 46 steals. Acuña is on pace for 41 homers and 77 steals. He could become the charter member of baseball's 40-50, 40-60 and 40-70 clubs.

"It would mean a lot to me personally just because I feel like not a lot of players have been able to accomplish something like that,"

Acuña, who is from Venezuela, said Sunday through a translator. "But my goal maintains the same, just try to stay as healthy as possible and help the team win."

Acuña's 23 homers and 44 steals, already a career high, are big reasons the Braves (61-32) boasted the majors' best record when they opened a three-game home series against Arizona on Tuesday night.

Even after losing two of three to the Chicago White Sox to end their streak of 11 consecutive series wins, the Braves led second-place Philadelphia by 9½ games in the NL East entering Wednesday night's games.

Acuña is only part of a power-

ful Atlanta lineup that also features Matt Olson's NL-leading totals of 30 homers and 77 RBIs. Even Olson is blown away by Acuña's all-around dominance.

"He's doing things that I've never seen before," Olson said Sunday. "He's got all the tools. He works good at-bats and hits the ball 500 feet and steals bases and throws guys out and makes great plays in the outfield. He does it all. We love having him on our squad and leading off every night."

Acuña already is the first player to hit 20 homers with 40 steals and 50 RBIs before the All-Star break.

He ranks second in the National League with his .334 batting

average while leading the majors in runs and hard-hit balls.

Perhaps most impressive is the plate discipline Acuña has demonstrated even while being an aggressive batter who attacks first pitches. Acuña's strikeouts have declined each month this season. He has only four strikeouts with seven walks in 48 July at-bats.

"I think he's going up there and I think he's keeping it simple but keeping a precise plan and he's going up there and executing," said Braves third baseman Austin Riley. "I think there's something to be said about keeping things simple, especially in this game, and I think he's doing that."

## Diamondbacks end 4-game skid, outlast Braves in slugfest

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Geraldo Perdomo was determined he would not be intimidated by Atlanta's five-run first inning.

"I just said to my teammates, 'If they do it, we can do it back,'" Perdomo said.

Perdomo gave Arizona the lead with a two-run double in the ninth inning and the Diamondbacks took advantage of Atlanta's worst pitching effort of the season to beat the Braves 16-13 on Tuesday night. It was Arizona's first game in which each team had at least 13 runs and the first in the majors since the Chicago White Sox beat the Cubs 17-13 on Aug. 27, 2021.

Just as Perdomo predicted, the Diamondbacks answered Atlanta's five-run first by scoring five in the second. The high-scoring pace led to a football-like final score.

"Couple missed extra points," Arizona manager Torey Lovullo joked.

NL East-leading Atlanta has lost three straight. Arizona snapped a four-game losing streak.

**Giants 4-11, Reds 2-10:** Casey Schmitt drew a bases-loaded walk that forced home the go-ahead run in a three-run seventh inning, and visiting San Francisco beat Cincinnati twice to increase their winning streak to seven games.

The suspended game was 2-2 when interrupted with one out in the top of the eighth after a wait of 1:55. With automatic runner Brett Wisely on second, Joc Pederson drove a pitch from Ian Gibaut (8-2) that hit the left-field wall

on a hop. Pederson advanced on Wilmer Flores' groundout and scored when Michael Conforto hit a sharp grounder.

In the second game, delayed by rain for 1 hour, 11 minutes at the start, Luke Weaver allowed four runs and four hits in 2½ innings. With the score 8-8, Mike Yastrzemski walked against Buck Farmer (2-4) with one out in the seventh and Blake Sabol singled with two outs.

**Rangers 5, Rays 3:** All-Star right-hander Nathan Eovaldi allowed two hits over six scoreless innings and matched the major league lead with his 11th victory as AL West-leading Texas beat visiting Tampa Bay.

Marcus Semien and Corey Seager homered for the Rangers (57-39), whose fifth consecutive victory since the break matched their season-best winning streak.

**Dodgers 10, Orioles 3:** Jason Heyward hit a three-run homer during a five-run second inning, and visiting Los Angeles routed Baltimore.

**Padres 9, Blue Jays 1:** Juan Soto hit a two-run homer for visiting San Diego and Joe Musgrove pitched six sharp innings to win his eighth straight decision.

**Phillies 4, Brewers 3:** Aaron Nola struck out six in 7½ innings, Kyle Schwarber homered and host Philadelphia moved a season-best 10 games over .500.

**Rockies 4, Astros 3:** Ezequiel Tovar lined a go-ahead triple in the fourth and host Colorado won a bullpen game in which it used seven pitchers.

**Cardinals 5, Marlins 2 (10):** Nolan Arenado's three-run homer in the 10th inning lifted host St. Louis over slumping Miami.

**Athletics 3, Red Sox 0:** Ryan Noda and JJ Bleday homered in the second inning as host Oakland ended an eight-game losing streak.

**Angels 5, Yankees 1:** Shohei Ohtani had an RBI triple, Mickey Moniak hit a two-run homer and Patrick Sandoval pitched two-hit ball into the eighth inning of host Los Angeles' victory over New York.

**Twins 10, Mariners 3:** Alex Kirilloff was a double shy of the cycle, Bailey Ober was sharp after a difficult first inning and visiting Minnesota defeated Seattle.

**Guardians 10, Pirates 1:** Josh Naylor homered twice, including a three-run shot that keyed a five-run first inning against All-Star Mitch Keller, and drove in six runs as visiting Cleveland rolled over Pittsburgh.

**Cubs 17, Nationals 3:** Seiya Suzuki homered and drove in three runs on a four-hit night, and host Chicago poured it on late to beat Washington.

**Mets 11, White Sox 10:** David Robertson retired Tim Anderson on a game-ending flyout that stranded runners on second and third, and host New York beat Chicago after building a seven-run lead behind two Francisco Álvarez home runs.

**Royals 11, Tigers 10:** Dairon Blanco tripled, doubled twice, singled and drove in three runs as host Kansas City overcame Spencer Torkelson's two-homer night to beat Detroit.



# Spotlight on hosts as Women's World Cup starts

Associated Press

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — In a country known more for its love of rugby than women's soccer, New Zealand is aiming to win fans as well as matches.

The Football Ferns kick off the Women's World Cup on Thursday night with a Group A match against Norway. The Ferns got the nod for the opener and will be followed by co-host Australia's match against Ireland in Sydney.

"I hope there will be a lot of people here for not just our games, but all of the games. It's a world tournament and something we've been so excited to have here now. I've been looking forward to this for three years," defender Ali Riley said. "So I hope the excitement is there and I hope we do well, so that maybe the people who didn't know about it will hear about it and will want to come to see us make history."

New Zealand Football announced that the opener at Auckland's Eden Park will have the

biggest crowd for a soccer match in the country's history, estimated to be at least 50,000.

"I was at the 1999 World Cup final in Los Angeles and I know what that did for me as a young girl. And so to have people here, that noise will give us energy," said Riley, who grew up in California and plays professionally for Angel City in the National Women's Soccer League.

"But also I know what that can do for any little girls seeing these players, these awesome, confident empowered, women and athletes just living their dreams."

While the Ferns are trying to capture hearts, the demand for tickets to Australia's opener was so high that the match was moved to Stadium Australia, which was built for the 2000 Olympics and can seat more than 82,000.

The Ferns have never won a World Cup match in five previous appearances. They have struggled this year, with losses in

seven of the nine games they've played.

While it's hoped that New Zealand will rally as hosts, the team faces a significant challenge in Norway, which won the World Cup in 1995. Considered the favorites in Group A, the Norwegians are 5-1-1 all-time against New Zealand, with the only loss coming in a 2019 exhibition match.

"There will be a lot of pressure, both on the home team but also on us, for the opening game, but we feel like we know what to expect," Norway coach Hege Riise said.

"Again, in opening game, everything can happen. But our preparation has been good on New Zealand, defensively and offensively, attacking, so we feel like we are prepared."

Ada Hegerberg has returned to Norway's World Cup squad after the striker's self-imposed hiatus from 2017 to 2022 in protest of what she believed was a distinct lack of respect for the wom-

en's national team.

The first woman to win the prestigious Ballon d'Or award, Hegerberg scored 43 goals in 76 international appearances. Currently playing for Lyon, she has scored a record 59 goals in the Champions League.

Like Hegerberg, Australia star Sam Kerr is one of the game's top players.

Kerr is Australia's all-time leading international scorer — among men and women — with 63 goals. She recently helped Chelsea clinch a fourth consecutive Women's Super League title and third straight FA Cup.

"For me the expectation has kind of been growing over the four years, so it's been something I've learned to deal with," she said. "Of course everyone in Australia has a lot of expectations, but it is something I take in my stride and I try to just enjoy it and I think back at Chelsea I've done that too. I've just enjoyed it and I think that's when I'm my best me."

## McIlroy laying low at British Open, hopes to end drought

Associated Press

HOYLAK, England — The most telling comment from Rory McIlroy about this British Open, and his hopes of ending an astonishing nine-year drought in the majors, is that he said nothing at all.

For the second straight major, McIlroy removed himself from the lineup of pre-tournament news conferences, instead offering a few vague quotes through the R&A and random interviews.

The attention on him is greater than ever, on and off the golf course.

He has been the strongest voice for the PGA Tour in its battle with LIV Golf, now shockingly a proposed partnership. Inside the ropes, he is coming off a win at the Scottish Open and now returns to Royal Liverpool, where he won wire-to-wire the last time the Open was in Hoylake in 2014.

Rain fell on the already green links of Hoylake on Tuesday, conditions that suited McIlroy in his previous four major titles, all of which led Pádraig Harrington to refer to McIlroy as a "person of interest" this week.

"Everything seems to be setting up nicely," Harrington said.

The question now is whether McIlroy is like other multiple major champions who collected all their trophies in a short period of time, or whether this nine-year drought is a long aberration.

Harrington was one of those players, collecting his three titles in a span of six majors. Jordan Spieth won three legs of Grand Slam over three years. Nick Price won three out of nine majors at the height of his game and never got another.

McIlroy won his four majors from the 2011 U.S. Open through the 2014 PGA Championship, and he looked to just be getting started. He is 34, considered the prime years for a golfer, though he is also in his 16th year as a pro.

"Patience — it's a horrible thing for Rory," Harrington said. "Oftentimes, you win your first, maybe there's two or three in there pretty quickly. From 10 years ago, there's more players around. It's not as free and easy, is it? It's not a foregone conclusion."

"We keep seeing that — players come into

the pomp of their career, they look unbeatable for a period of time, usually two seasons," he said. "Look, he can win any week and he's got to have good feelings going into Hoylake."

Twenty-four players have won majors since McIlroy captured his last one at rain-soaked Valhalla in the 2014 PGA Championship, some multiple times — Brooks Koepka with five, Spieth with three, Jon Rahm, Collin Morikawa, Justin Thomas and Dustin Johnson with two each.

It's not getting any easier.

McIlroy returned to No. 2 in the world with his victory in the Scottish Open. He said he would have arrived at Hoylake with confidence even without winning based on his consistent play the last few months — six consecutive finishes in the top 10, including his runner-up finish in the U.S. Open last month that ran his drought to 33 majors without winning.

"I can understand how when you get on a roll like that and win one, next time you're in position you win another, well, it's only fair to believe that the next one you're going to be ready to handle the moment," he said.

# Messi has first training session in Miami

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Lionel Messi jogged a lap with his new teammates, took part in a warmup drill of players making short passes in a tight circle and before long tapped his left foot at a ball that wound up in the back of an open net.

Inter Miami's new star wasted no time fitting right in.

The World Cup winner and seven-time Ballon d'Or recipient took part in a training session with his new Major League Soccer club for the first time Tuesday, three days after signing a 2½-year contract that'll pay him between \$50 million and \$60 million a year.

A helicopter hovered overhead, drones buzzed around the field and about 200 media members lined up toward the back of the complex to get a look at Messi. He, like newly signed Sergio Busquets — also a World Cup winner — went through a welcome tunnel as part of the first

practice, which meant jogging past teammates as they lined up and clapped.

"With Leo coming here, it raises the bar again," said Inter Miami co-owner David Beckham, who like Messi had an incredible career overseas before coming to MLS toward the end of his playing career. "It has the eyes of the world. Not just Argentina, but the eyes of the world."

Messi was not made available for comment to the general media, nor were any other players or coach Tata Martino.

"It's about legacy for him," Beckham said of Messi. "He's at the stage of his career where he's done everything that any soccer player can do in a sport. He's one of the greatest players, if not the greatest player, to ever play the game. So he's still hungry. I've seen him on the training pitch. I know he's still hungry. Sergio is exactly the same. And they're the type of players

that we want to bring to our club."

Messi's first match is expected to be Friday, a Leagues Cup contest at home against Cruz Azul. Some tickets are going for as little as \$275 or so on the secondary market; some of the very best seats are exceeding \$19,000. Prices have been fluctuating quite a bit and likely will continue doing so until game time.

Then again, someone might get front-row tickets for \$1. Miami Mayor Francis Suarez, a Republican candidate for president, has asked backers to "consider making a \$1 donation" to get him on the debate stage — saying all such donors would be entered in a chance to be in the front row for Messi's debut game.

Such is the power of Messi. Inter Miami hasn't won an MLS match in more than two months; it has gone 0-8-3 in MLS play since beating New England on

May 13.

Making the playoffs are a long shot for Miami. But there is hope for other trophies, such as Leagues Cup — a tournament between teams from MLS and Mexico's Liga MX, with both leagues shutting down regular play for the competition — and the U.S. Open Cup.

Inter Miami is in the semifinals of the U.S. Open Cup; it'll play Cincinnati in late August. The final of that tournament is in September. Beckham is taking a big-picture view of how the franchise is defining success right now.

"We feel we've succeeded," Beckham said. "Is it good enough? No. We want to succeed on the field. We want to win trophies. That's the most important thing. We do feel that we succeeded, but short term success? We have Lionel Messi. That's success. ... The foundations are there. The foundations are there to succeed."

## Northwestern joins list of schools with sexual scandals

Associated Press

Northwestern has been added to a long list of American universities to face a scandal in athletics and may eventually join the trend of making large payouts following allegations of sexual abuse.

A former Wildcats football player filed the first lawsuit against Pat Fitzgerald and members of the school's leadership on Tuesday, seeking damages stemming from a hazing scandal that cost the former football coach his job.

More lawsuits, filed by multiple law firms, are expected to follow from former football and baseball players as well as from student-athletes who played other sports for the private school.

The private, Big Ten institution now has another thing in common with other schools in the conference, including Penn State, Michigan State, Ohio State, Michigan and Minnesota, with a scandal tied to sexual abuse.

Connection could be costly.

At least eight former Northwestern football players have retained attorneys follow-

ing recent revelations that led to Fitzgerald's firing and sharp criticism of university leadership for its initial response to the allegations.

Civil rights attorney Ben Crump and the Chicago-based Levin & Perconti law firm scheduled a news conference Wednesday morning in Chicago with former Northwestern athletes. Crump has represented the families of George Floyd and others in high-profile civil rights cases.

Criminal charges are also possible.

Illinois, like nearly all states in recent decades, has criminalized hazing. It is typically a Class A misdemeanor, which can carry up to one year in prison. Under Illinois law, failure of a school official to report hazing is also a crime — a misdemeanor — and can carry a maximum penalty of between six months and a year in prison.

A "hazing prevention" page on Northwestern's website includes descriptions of Illinois hazing laws.

Cincinnati-based attorney Tim Burke, who has no ties to the Northwestern lawsuit, said the civil litigation can take many years

to resolve because of complex legal issues, the number of potential plaintiffs and the voluminous evidence.

"More than a decade is not out of the range of possibilities," Burke said. "But Northwestern is not going to want this to go on that long."

In a letter to Northwestern's faculty and staff, President Michael Schill wrote that an outside firm will be hired to evaluate how the school detects threats to student-athletes' welfare and to examine the athletics culture in Evanston, Ill., and its relationship to academics at the prestigious institution.

Northwestern fired Fitzgerald last week after a university investigation found allegations of hazing by 11 current or former players, including "forced participation, nudity and sexualized acts of a degrading nature," Schill wrote.

After the school initially suspended Fitzgerald, The Daily Northwestern published an article including allegations from a former player who described specific instances of hazing and abuse and suggested he may have been aware.