

## NATO aims to project unity in DC; cracks show

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The 32 members of the NATO military alliance will meet in Washington next week to project a united front on Ukraine and its fight against Russian aggression, but there could be some fractures behind the harmonious facade.

Bulgarian President Rumen Radev last week refused to lead his country's delegation to the NATO summit due to disagreements with Bulgaria's position in support of Ukraine.

Slovakia's prime minister, Robert Fico, claimed last month that he was the target of an assassination attempt because his opposition to arming Ukraine deviated from the European mainstream.

And Hungary has continued to maintain close ties with Russia and resist pressure to help Ukraine economically or militarily. Prime Minister Viktor Orban urged Ukraine on Tuesday to consider a cease-fire to speed up peace talks.

More cracks in the alliance could emerge Sunday with the potential electoral triumph of France's main far-right party. The party, National Rally, has a history of pro-Russia sympathies, and last year abstained in a

vote on France's security pact with Ukraine.

Outgoing NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg acknowledged the split in opinion on Ukraine in a news conference with Orban in June, but expressed optimism in the alliance ultimately standing together in solidarity.

"We are 32 allies, and sometimes there are different opinions, but we have proven again and again that we are able to overcome them and find a common way forward," he said.

Orban has assured NATO that Hungary will not oppose the expected announcement next week of a new mission in Germany to coordinate aid to Ukraine, as well as a long-term financial pledge by the alliance to provide military support.

But Orban also made clear that Hungary will not contribute personnel or funds for the efforts.

For now, any disagreements among NATO allies concerning Ukraine seem to be superficial cracks in the veneer of the alliance rather than at its foundations, according to Sean Monaghan, a U.K. visiting fellow with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.

"Gaining consensus in the face of differ-

ing national positions on critical issues is normal business for NATO, and I would expect any cracks to be patched up by the time we get to Washington next week," he said.

The main aim of the summit will be to maintain and show unity, especially as the alliance marks a landmark 75th anniversary while war rages in Europe, and its largest member — the United States — moves into a highly consequential presidential election, Monaghan said.

The public is unlikely to see the kind of discord that accompanied last year's summit in Lithuania, when open debate about Ukraine's future with the alliance caused Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to lash out in frustration, he said.

"We won't see any last-minute debates in public this time. We'll see a unified position on Ukraine," Monaghan said.

The glue holding the NATO alliance together ultimately goes beyond each member nation's shifting politics, Monaghan said.

"NATO is an alliance of liberal democracies," he said. "The democracies have elections, and the positions of allies change, but I don't think they change so fundamentally to turn cracks into massive fissures."

## Fourth of July marked by heat waves, crowded travel

*Associated Press*

The hamburgers aren't the only things sizzling this Fourth of July: Millions of people are under heat warnings as large numbers of Americans traveled to toast their nation's birth with parades, cookouts and fiery splashes of colors against the evening sky.

Travel records are projected to fall with people already jamming airports and crowding highways ahead of the Fourth of July to get to their destinations. Across the West, meanwhile, residents were dealing with stifling heat as the National Weather Service warned of a

"significant and extremely dangerous" heat wave across much of the region.

Fireworks — a staple for the holiday — were expected to reach an all-time high with an untold number of backyard displays in addition to 16,000 professional shows lighting up the horizon from sea to shining sea.

"This is how we celebrate. It's the bombs bursting in air. It's the rockets' red glare. That's how people show their pride and patriotism," said Julie Heckman of the American Pyrotechnics Association.

All signs pointed to big celebrations: The Transportation

Security Administration reported that a record-breaking nearly 3 million people traveled through airports in a single day last week, and that figure is expected to be broken this week. And AAA projected that 60.6 million people will travel by car during the holiday period. Part of the boost was attributed to easing inflation, though many Americans remain concerned about the economy.

On much of the West Coast, residents were advised to take precautions to avoid overheating on the holiday.

Temperatures were expect-

ed to top 100 degrees across both coastal and inland areas of California, with heat spreading into the Pacific Northwest. Some spots in the desert Southwest were expecting temperatures topping 120 degrees. Hot, muggy conditions also permeated the Deep South and Middle Atlantic.

The Northern California city of Oroville's annual fireworks were canceled as an estimated 26,000 residents remained displaced by the growing Thompson Fire, while hundreds of firefighters toiled under extreme heat to keep flames from reaching more homes.

# DOD sends advanced fighters to Japan

By **BRIAN McELHINEY**  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Air Force will permanently deploy 36 F-15EX Eagles to Okinawa as part of a broader plan to station more advanced U.S. fighter aircraft across Japan over the next several years, the Defense Department announced Wednesday.

The F-15EX fighters are “part of a planned divestment and modernization” and the permanent replacements for 48 F-15C/Ds previously stationed at Kadena Air Base, according to a DOD news re-

lease. The Air Force will continue to rotate squadrons of fourth- and fifth-generation fighters through Kadena until the transition is complete, according to the Pentagon.

As part of the broader effort, the Air Force will also deploy 48 F-35A Lightning II fighters to Misawa Air Base to replace 36 F-16 Fighting Falcons.

The Marine Corps will “modify the number of F-35B aircraft” at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni as part of its ongoing force design modernization.

The 18th Wing at Kadena

and Pacific Air Forces referred further questions to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, which referred to the news release. The Okinawa Times first reported the deployment Tuesday, citing multiple, unnamed U.S. officials.

The modernization plan, coordinated with the Japanese government, “reflects over \$10 billion of capability investments to enhance the U.S.-Japan Alliance, bolster regional deterrence, and strengthen peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region,” the release states.

Tensions throughout the region in recent years have steadily increased between the U.S. and China, which the Pentagon identified as a global “pacing challenge” and an aggressive presence in the East and South China seas in the 2022 National Defense Strategy.

“The Department’s plan to station the Joint Force’s most advanced tactical aircraft in Japan demonstrates the ironclad U.S. commitment to the defense of Japan and both countries’ shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific region,” the statement said.

## Ex-engineer charged with obstructing probe of fatal '17 KC-130T crash in Miss.

*Associated Press*

OXFORD, Miss. — A former engineer at a U.S. military air logistics center has been charged with making false statements and obstructing justice during the criminal investigation into a 2017 military plane crash in Mississippi that killed all 16 service members aboard, prosecutors said Wednesday.

James Michael Fisher, 67, was arrested Tuesday after a federal grand jury in northern Mississippi indicted him, according to a news release from U.S. Attorney Clay Joyner. The release said Fisher is a former lead propulsion engineer at the Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex in Warner Robins, Ga. Fisher, who now lives in Portugal, made an initial court appearance in Jacksonville, Fla.

A spokesperson for the U.S. attorney’s office in northern Mississippi said she did not have information Wednesday about whether Fisher is represented by an attorney.

Fifteen Marines and one Navy corpsman were killed July 10, 2017, when the Marine Corps KC-130T transport plane broke into pieces in the sky and slammed into a soybean field near Itta Bena, Miss. The plane was based at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, N.Y., and it was taking Marine special operations forces from North Carolina to Arizona for training.

The crash was the deadliest Marine Corps air disaster since 2005, when a transport helicopter crashed in a sandstorm in Iraq, killing 30 Marines and a sailor.

The indictment alleges Fisher knowingly concealed engineering documents and made false statements to investigators about his engineering decisions that might have been related to the crash, according to the news release from Joyner.

Fisher faces up to 20 years in prison if he is convicted on the two false statements and two obstruction of justice charges.

## Philippines vows reaction if assaulted in disputed sea

*Associated Press*

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine forces will defend themselves with “the same level of force” if they come under assault again from China’s coast guard in the disputed South China Sea, where Chinese personnel armed with machetes and spears injured Filipino navy personnel and damaged two of their boats in a chaotic faceoff last month, the Philippine military chief said Thursday.

Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. asked China to pay \$1 million in damages for the two navy boats and return seven rifles that he said were seized by Chinese coast guard personnel during the June 17 confrontation at Second Thomas Shoal.

Philippine officials relayed the demands, along with a strong protest, during talks with a Chinese government delegation in Manila. The Chinese delegation did not immediately respond to the demands, a Philippine official said on condition of

anonymity because of not being authorized to discuss the sensitive issue publicly.

The Philippine military may also ask China to pay for planned surgery on the hand of a navy officer who lost his right thumb during the clash in the shoal when it was hit by a Chinese navy vessel that rammed his boat, Brawner said.

“What we’ll do is we will apply the same level of force that would allow us to defend ourselves,” Brawner said when asked in a news conference what Filipino navy personnel would do in case they are involved in another confrontation with Chinese forces at the shoal. “If a knife is used, for example, our personnel will also use a knife, nothing more, under the concept of proportionality.”

“When I said that we’ll fight back, I meant we won’t allow ourselves to be bullied just like that, just like what happened the last time because, of course, our adversaries had weapons,” Brawner said.

# Lawmaker seeks to counter immunity ruling

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — A leading House Democrat is preparing a constitutional amendment in response to the Supreme Court's landmark immunity ruling, seeking to reverse the decision "and ensure that no president is above the law."

Rep. Joseph Morelle of New York, the top Democrat on the House Administration Committee, sent a letter to colleagues informing them of his intent to file the resolution, which would kick start what's traditionally a cumbersome amendment process.

"This amendment will do what SCOTUS failed to do — prioritize our democracy," Morelle said in a statement to AP.

In referring to Donald Trump, Morelle said the former president "must be held accountable for his decisions. I urge my colleagues to support my amendment and stand with me on the front line to protect our democracy."

It's the most significant legislative response yet to the decision this week from the court's conservative majority, which stunned Washington and drew a sharp dis-

sent from the court's liberal justices warning of the perils to democracy, particularly as Trump seeks a return to the White House. Still, the effort stands almost no chance of succeeding in this Congress.

Writing for the majority, Chief Justice John Roberts said that presidents have broad immunity from criminal prosecution for actions taken within their official duties — a decision that throws into doubt the Justice Department's cases against Trump, including his efforts to overturn the 2020 election.

Trump and his allies celebrated the ruling by the court, which includes three justices appointed by the former president, and his legal team immediately moved to delay sentencing for his felony conviction in an unrelated hush money case in New York state court that had been scheduled for next week. The judge agreed to push off the sentencing until fall.

The outcome all but ensures the federal cases against Trump will not be resolved before the November election when he faces a likely rematch with President Joe Biden.

While the constitutional amendment process would likely take years, and in fact may never come to fruition, supporters believe it is the most surefire way, even beyond a new law, to enshrine the norm that presidents can face consequences for their actions.

"This amendment will guarantee that no public officer of the United States — including the president — is able to evade the accountability that any other American would face for violating our laws," Morelle wrote in a letter to colleagues this week.

He quoted from Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who led the dissent, and Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson who joined in dissenting, before summing up his in his own words: "Presidents are citizens, not tyrants."

Congress can launch the constitutional amendment process and then send it to the states for ratification. Such a resolution takes a two-thirds vote in both the House and Senate, which is highly unlikely at this time of divided government, and ratification by three-fourths of the states.

So far, there have been 27 amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

## \$50M Key Bridge cleanup contract approved by board of Md. officials

*The Washington Post*

Maryland's Board of Public Works voted Wednesday to approve a \$50 million contract for clearing debris from the Patapsco River following the collapse of Baltimore's Key Bridge in March.

The Maryland Transportation Authority awarded the contract to Skanska USA Civil Southeast Inc. on an emergency basis in April, weeks after the container ship Dali lost power and destroyed the span.

While the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers oversaw clearing of the federal shipping channel, which fully reopened June 10, the Skanska crews were busy removing vast amounts of mangled steel and buckled concrete that had collapsed into other parts of the Patapsco.

That work allowed vessels that did not need the full 50-foot depth of the main federal channel to resume trade with the Port of Baltimore. The U.S. firm is part of Skanska Group, the Sweden-based construction conglomerate.

Gov. Wes Moore, a Democrat, a member of the board that must approve major contracts, said Wednesday that Skanska's work was "critical ... to efficiently and safely be able to

clear the debris." Comptroller Brooke Lierman, a Democrat, and Chief Deputy Treasurer Jonathan Martin also voted yes.

Skanska said its crews finished their work on the water last month.

The transportation authority "anticipates that this work is eligible for federal reimbursement," according to procurement documents released by the board, and Maryland officials said federal emergency relief dollars have been used for the project.

According to the procurement documents, the authority pushed ahead with the emergency contract with Skanska "due to the risk of underwater demolition, the urgency of completion, and additional coordination with other salvage/recovery companies."

Skanska was also selected because it had already been working on demolishing a bridge across the Potomac River. Since it was already mobilized there, "it was expeditious for the contractor to perform" the Patapsco work, according to the documents. Using competitive bidding to procure the contract would have delayed the debris removal by at least eight months, the documents said.

## Lightning said to cause wildfire that ravaged NM

*Associated Press*

RUIDOSO, N.M. — A lightning strike caused the larger of two wildfires that has killed at least two people and destroyed or damaged more than 1,400 structures in New Mexico, authorities said Wednesday.

The South Fork Fire was first reported June 17 on the Mescalero Apache Reservation and forced the evacuation of the Village of Ruidoso. The wildfire now is 87% contained after burning more than 27 square miles. Parts of the village have been evacuated again because of recent flash floods.

The fire was investigated by eight agencies including the FBI, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The fire's point of origin plus evidence and data supported the cause being a lightning strike, investigators said.

Meanwhile, authorities said the cause of the nearby Salt Fire remains under investigation. It has burned more than 12 square miles and was 84% contained as of Wednesday.

# Weakened Beryl roars toward Mexico

Associated Press

PLAYA DEL CARMEN, Mexico — Hurricane Beryl ripped off roofs in Jamaica, jumbled fishing boats in Barbados and damaged or destroyed 95% of homes on a pair of islands in St. Vincent and the Grenadines before rumbling toward the Cayman Islands and taking aim at Mexico's Caribbean coast after leaving at least seven people dead in its wake.

What had been the earliest storm to develop into a Category 5 hurricane in the Atlantic, weakened to a Category 3 by early Thursday but remained a major hurricane. Its eye was forecast to pass just south of the Cayman

Islands overnight.

"Weakening is forecast during the next day or two, though Beryl is forecast to remain a hurricane until it makes landfall on the Yucatan Peninsula," the National Hurricane Center in Miami said in its 8 a.m. ET update.

Mexico's popular Caribbean coast prepared shelters, evacuated some small outlying coastal communities and even moved sea turtle eggs off beaches threatened by storm surge.

Mexico's navy patrolled areas like Tulum telling tourists in Spanish and English to prepare for the storm's arrival.

Early Thursday morning, the storm's center was about 50

miles southwest of Grand Cayman island and 385 miles east-southeast of Tulum, Mexico. It had maximum sustained winds of 120 mph and was moving west-northwest at 20 mph. Beryl was forecast to make landfall in a sparsely populated area of lagoons and mangroves south of Tulum in the early hours of Friday, probably as a Category 2 storm. Then it was expected to cross the Yucatan Peninsula and restrengthen over the warm Gulf of Mexico to make a second strike on Mexico's northeast coast near the Texas border.

The storm had already shown its destructive potential across a long swath of the southeastern

Caribbean. The worst perhaps came earlier in Beryl's trajectory when it smacked Mayreau and Union Island, two small islands of the Lesser Antilles.

Michelle Forbes, the St. Vincent and Grenadines director of the National Emergency Management Organization, said that about 95% of homes in Mayreau and Union Island have been damaged by Hurricane Beryl.

Three people were reported killed in Grenada and Carriacou and another in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, officials said. Three other deaths were reported in northern Venezuela, where four people were missing, officials said.

## Zelenskyy: Trump should reveal plans to end war

Bloomberg News

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Donald Trump should come forward with his plan to quickly end the war with Russia, warning that any proposal must avoid violating the nation's sovereignty.

"If Trump knows how to finish this war, he should tell us today," Zelenskyy said in a Bloomberg Television interview in Kyiv on Wednesday. "If there are risks to Ukrainian independence, if we lose statehood — we want to be ready for this, we want to know."

The former U.S. president, who leads in polls over President Joe Biden ahead of the November election, has boasted that he'll end the war by the time he's inaugurated in January. In a televised debate last week, Trump decried the billions of dollars spent on Ukraine's defense, saying that Kyiv is "not winning the war."

In a nearly hourlong interview, the Ukrainian leader lamented the delays in weapons deliveries from Western allies and said he was "potentially ready" to meet with Trump to hear his team's

proposals.

"They can't plan my life and life of our people and our children," he said. "We want to understand whether in November we will have the powerful support of the U.S., or will be all alone."

Zelenskyy pushed back on the notion that Ukrainian and Russian forces are in a deadlock on the battlefield, saying that the military is better positioned in terms of manpower than it was months ago and a new offensive is a matter of arming its brigades.

And while he lauded the \$61 billion assistance package approved by the U.S. Congress this year — after a six-month long delay — he said the military equipment was taking too long to make it to the front.

"This is the biggest tragedy of this war, that between the decision and real fact, we have real long, long, long wait," Zelenskyy said.

The Ukrainian leader also said China could play a "tremendous role" in resolving the conflict, since Moscow is so dependent on its market for exports.

## Conviction of 2 Americans in Italy cop's death upheld

Associated Press

ROME — An Italian appeals court on Wednesday upheld the convictions of two American men in the killing of an Italian plainclothes police officer during a botched sting operation five years ago but significantly reduced their sentences.

The new verdict, ordered after Italy's highest court threw out the original convictions, drew acceptance from the men's families and disappointment from the officer's widow.

Finnegan Lee Elder and Gabriel Natale-Hjorth had been found guilty in the July 2019 killing of Carabinieri Vice Brigadier Mario Cerciello Riga, and after the first trial, were both sentenced to life in prison, Italy's harshest penalty.

Those sentences were reduced on appeal before Italy's highest Cassation Court last year ordered a new trial altogether. On Wednesday, the appeals court convicted Finnegan and sentenced him to 15 years and 2 months in prison.

Natale-Hjorth was sentenced to 11 years and four months, along with a \$863 fine.

"I don't think we could ask for a reasonable, better decision today," said Ethan Elder, Finnegan Lee Elder's father.

Teenagers at the time of the killing, the former schoolmates from the San Francisco Bay area had met up in Rome to spend a few days vacationing. The fatal confrontation took place after they arranged to meet a small-time drug dealer, who turned out to have been a police informant, to recover money lost in a bad drug deal. Instead, they were confronted by two officers.

Cerciello Riga was stabbed 11 times with a knife brought from the hotel room.

In ordering the retrial, the Cassation Court said it hadn't been proven beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendants, with limited Italian language skills, had understood that they were dealing with Italian police officers when they went to meet the alleged drug dealer.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Stripper sues over age restrictions for workers

**FL** TALLAHASSEE — A 19-year-old and the club where she worked as a stripper have sued Florida's attorney general and two local prosecutors to stop enforcement of a new state law prohibiting adult entertainment businesses from employing people who are under 21, claiming it violates their constitutional rights.

Serenity Michelle Bushey claims in the lawsuit that she lost her job at Cafe Risque in the Gainesville area after the law took effect on Monday since she is younger than 21. The purpose of the law was to deter human trafficking, according to Florida lawmakers.

The lawsuit was filed Monday in federal court in Tallahassee on behalf of Bushey, the owner of Cafe Risque and two adult businesses in Jacksonville. It seeks a permanent injunction stopping the law from being enforced, claiming it violates their First Amendment right to free speech and 14th Amendment right to equal protection.

### NTSB: Ex-astronaut was doing a flyby before crash

**WA** ORCAS ISLAND — The former Apollo 8 astronaut best known for taking the iconic "Earthrise" photo, who died last month while piloting a plane over the waters off Washington state, was doing a flyby near a friend's house when the fatal accident occurred, federal authorities said Tuesday.

William Anders, whose "Earthrise" photo showed the planet as a shadowed blue marble

from space in 1968, had texted a friend to say he planned to do a flyby near her house on the western shore of Orcas Island, the National Transportation Safety Board said in its preliminary report.

The friend said Anders' flybys were not unusual, according to the NTSB. She said that he typically did two flybys, and while he sometimes rocked the airplane wings, "he never performed any kind of aerobatic maneuvers."

Around 11:37 a.m. on June 7, the friend began to hear the "familiar" noise of his airplane, the NTSB said. Shortly after, she saw the older-model Beech A45 overhead traveling north along the shore in front of her house.

She briefly lost sight of the plane as it flew behind trees. When she saw it come back into view it was heading south and flying over the water. After it passed by, she saw the left wing drop and thought it was part of his routine. But the plane plummeted toward the water below.

### Officers kill 3 coyotes after attack on 5-year-old

**CA** SAN FRANCISCO — Wildlife officers shot and killed three coyotes at the San Francisco Botanical Garden over the weekend after a coyote attacked a 5-year-old girl, authorities said Monday.

Two coyotes were shot on Saturday and one was shot on Sunday, said Patrick Foy, a spokesperson for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

A coyote bit the 5-year-old on Friday while the girl was playing during a supervised summer camp visit at the garden within Golden Gate Park. The girl was treated for the bite

wound at a hospital, her mother, Helen Sparrow, told the San Francisco Chronicle.

"If a coyote or bear or mountain lion attacks a person, those animals are euthanized, and we conduct a rabies test on them post-mortem and take DNA samples," Foy said Monday.

Officers were able to retrieve a DNA sample from the girl's wound. Scientists on Monday were attempting to use that sample to identify which coyote attacked her. If none of the samples match, agents may need to trap or kill other coyotes in the park, Foy said.

### Untreated water tied to salmonella outbreak

**FL** BOYNTON BEACH — Untreated water used by a Florida cucumber grower is one likely source of salmonella food poisoning that sickened nearly 450 people across the U.S. this spring, federal health officials said Tuesday.

But that grower doesn't account for all of the cucumber-related illnesses and 125 hospitalizations that were reported from late March through early June, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

Salmonella found in untreated canal water used by Bedner Growers Inc. of Boynton Beach, Fla., matched a strain of the bacteria that caused some of the illnesses reported in more than 30 states and Washington, D.C. Additional types of salmonella were detected in soil and water samples collected at the site, FDA officials said.

Bedner Growers supplied Fresh Start Produce Sales of

Delray Beach, Fla., which recalled crates of cucumbers in late May after the first illnesses were reported. Bedner Growers also supplied cucumbers to multiple places where ill people reported buying or eating the produce, FDA said.

The canal water was not applied to edible parts of the cucumber plants, but was used for subsoil watering, said Bedner Growers' owner Steve Bedner. He added that it complies with federal rules and is "a common industry practice."

### Woman who claimed to be heiress is extradited

**DC** WASHINGTON — A woman accused of traveling across the U.S. claiming to be an Irish heiress and scamming several victims out of tens of thousands of dollars has been extradited to the United Kingdom, a U.S. official said Tuesday.

Marianne Smyth faces allegations that she stole more than \$170,000 from the victims from 2008 to 2010 in Northern Ireland. A U.S. magistrate judge in Maine ruled in May that there was sufficient evidence for extradition of the American, who accusers say has also fashioned herself as a witch, a psychic and a friend to Hollywood stars.

A spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Justice confirmed the extradition.

Authorities overseas have said Smyth stole money that she had promised to invest and also arranged to sell a home to a victim but instead took the money. Smyth's victims in the U.S. included Johnathan Walton, a podcaster who warned others about her grifts.

— From wire reports

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# Djokovic grinds his way past wild card

Associated Press

LONDON — Novak Djokovic said he wouldn't have been surprised if his second-round match against young Jacob Fearnley at Wimbledon went to a fifth set, but he's "very glad it didn't."

The seven-time champion at the All England Club beat his 22-year-old Scottish opponent 6-3, 6-4, 5-7, 7-5 on Centre Court on Thursday in another test of his fitness following recent knee surgery.

"Can I be playing better and moving better? Yes, absolutely," Djokovic said in an on-court interview. "So I'm hoping that as the tournament progresses each day or each match, I'll be feeling a bit better."

Fearnley, a wild-card entry

who recently finished playing college tennis at TCU, had a strong cheering section that erupted when he took the third set.

"He served very well, it was very difficult to break his serve. He made me work, definitely," Djokovic said.

The 24-time Grand Slam champion said he should have closed it out in straight sets, but that he "was not really comfortable in my own skin, particularly in the third and fourth.

"Sometimes you have rough days where maybe you are not feeling your best," he added, "and of course it also depends on the opponent across the net. He made me earn this victory."

No. 5 Jessica Pegula became the highest-seeded women's

player to lose. The American was defeated by Wang Xinyu 6-4, 6-7 (7), 6-1. For Wang, it was her first victory over a top-10 player.

Two-time Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka was the No. 3 seed at Wimbledon before she pulled out before the first round because of a shoulder injury.

Britain's big day got off to a rough start when wild-card entry Yuriko Lily Miyazaki won only 19 points en route to a 6-0, 6-0 loss to Daria Kasatkina.

The 28-year-old Miyazaki committed 31 unforced errors and five double-faults in falling to the No. 14-seeded Kasatkina, a Russian who won the Eastbourne title ahead of the grass-court Grand Slam.

Later on Centre Court, Andy Murray was set to play doubles. The two-time Wimbledon champion pulled out of the singles competition.

Kasatkina will next face Paula Badosa, who advanced Thursday by beating Brenda Fruhvirtova 6-4, 6-2.

No. 12 Madison Keys marked U.S. Independence Day with a 6-2, 6-2 victory over Wang Yafan to reach the third round.

"I've always really loved playing during the Fourth of July. I think I've spent more Fourth of Julys in London than anywhere else in the world," the 29-year-old American said. "It's always fun, and it's definitely an experience. Like today walking by I saw a bunch of Americans, and they all said, 'Happy Fourth.'"

# Ohtani voted All-Star DH for fourth straight year

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Shohei Ohtani became the first player elected to start at designated hitter in four straight All-Star Games, joined by New York Yankees outfielder Aaron Judge as the only holdovers from last year in the lineups announced Wednesday for the July 16 game at Arlington, Texas.

Philadelphia could have three of the four National League infielders after fans voted shortstop Trea Turner and third baseman Alec Bohm to start alongside first baseman Bryce Harper, whose status is uncertain because of a leg injury.

Major League Baseball said this is the first time each league has had no more than one player repeat as an elected starter since fan balloting resumed in 1970.

Six teams have two starters each: Yankees outfielder Juan Soto was voted in alongside Judge, who gained his berth last week with Harper as the top vote-getters from each league in the first round of balloting. The

second round was from Sunday until Wednesday.

Baltimore catcher Adley Rutschman and shortstop Gunnar Henderson were elected along with Houston second baseman Jose Altuve and DH Jordan Alvarez; Cleveland third baseman José Ramírez and outfielder Steven Kwan; San Diego outfielder Jurickson Profar and Fernando Tatis Jr.; and Milwaukee catcher William Contreras and outfielder Christian Yelich.

Toronto first baseman Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and Arizona second baseman Ketel Marte were also voted in.

Philadelphia last had three elected infielders in 1982 with Pete Rose, Mike Schmidt and Manny Trillo. Harper went on the injured list on June 28 because of a strained left hamstring but could return ahead of the All-Star Game.

Tatis hasn't played since June 21 because of a stress reaction in his right thigh bone and may be sidelined past the All-Star break.

Pitchers and reserves will be announced Sunday.

Ohtani is an All-Star for the fourth straight season but first since leaving the Los Angeles Angels for a record \$700 million, 10-year contract with the Dodgers. He was an unprecedented two-way All-Star from 2021-23 but isn't pitching this season while he recovers from reconstructive elbow surgery.

Altuve earned his ninth All-Star trip and sixth as a starter, Ramírez his sixth selection and third as a starter and Guerrero his fourth and third as a starter.

Alvarez, Bohm, Contreras, Henderson, Kwan, Profar, Rutschman and Soto are among eight first-time starters. Soto is making his fourth All-Star trip, his first for the AL.

"It means a lot. It's a lot of hard work," Soto said at Yankee Stadium. "Been grinding a lot. Finally got my first start, so it's pretty cool."

No players were elected to start from the host Rangers, who had four starters at last year's

game in Seattle: second baseman Marcus Semien, shortstop Corey Seager, third baseman Josh Jung and catcher Jonah Heim.

Profar became an All-Star for the first time in his 11th big league season. He remained on the free-agent market until a week into spring training before agreeing to a \$1 million, one-year deal with the Padres.

In the closest NL vote, Tatis (15.36%) edged the Dodgers' Teoscar Hernández (15.26%) and the Phillies' Brandon Marsh (14.73%) for the third outfield spot. Turner beat out injured Dodgers shortstop Mookie Betts 51-49%.

In the AL, Alvarez edged Baltimore's Ryan O'Hearn 52-48% at DH and Kwan beat out the Orioles' Anthony Santander 28-26% for the final outfield spot. During the first round of voting from June 5-27, Guerrero trailed Baltimore's Ryan Mountcastle, Hernández topped Tatis, and Betts was ahead of Turner.

# Campbell will be 1st woman to work NHL bench

*Associated Press*

SEATTLE — Once her playing career ended, Jessica Campbell found a new passion in coaching.

At the time, she may not have expected it would eventually lead her to the NHL, let alone as the first woman to work on the bench of an NHL franchise.

“I’ve had maybe in a naive way had the courage to believe this is possible and even though I didn’t see it, I believed I could do it,” Campbell said. “And I think with that inner belief, whatever it is in sport and life, you can create whatever you believe in.”

Campbell was hired as an assistant coach for the Seattle Kraken on Wednesday, becoming the first woman to hold an on-the-bench role as an assistant or associate coach in NHL history.

She has spent the past two seasons working as an assistant coach for Seattle’s AHL affiliate in Coachella Valley alongside Dan Bylsma, who was hired in late May as the head coach of the Kraken. There were immediate questions about whether Campbell would be making the move.

She will, and in doing so break through another barrier for women in hockey. Emily Engel-Natzke was hired by the Washington Capitals in 2022 as video coach, making her the first woman with a full-time assistant role in the league.

Now, there will be a woman on the bench.

“I’m humbled, obviously, to be in this position and you speak to the word first, to be the first, but that’s never really where my focus is. It’s always on the work. It’s on the impact. It’s on the job. There’s a lot to this game and to this job, so I’ve never taken it for granted,” Campbell said.

“I think the biggest thing is I’m reminded often and it puts a lot of meaning into the work, and I know that if the team has success and my impact is a good one, then it could potentially open up doors for others and maybe open eyes for others to maybe think differently.”

Campbell was a decorated player in the NCAA, the Canadian Women’s Hockey League and Canada’s women’s national team, with whom she won silver at the 2015 world championship.

With the exception of a short stint with the Malmo Redhawks in Sweden in 2019-20, she hung up her skates in 2017 and had become highly regarded as a skating coach when she joined Coachella Valley in 2022. She had also worked as an assistant coach for Germany during the 2022 IIHF World Championships.

She said it was during her time running her own business as a skating and skill-development coach that the idea of coaching in the NHL felt like an aspiration worth pursuing. Campbell specifically noted the time she spent working with Brent Seabrook during his recovery from injury.

“I realized this is what I want to do. These guys are showing up for my skates in numbers and maybe I want to pursue this goal in a different light, get behind the bench and I felt like what I was teaching, what I was working with them on was translating and it was hitting in a different way,” Campbell said.

The 32-year-old native of Rocanville, Saskatchewan, was the first full-time female assistant coach in the AHL when she was

hired by Coachella Valley before the start of its first season. She also had a one-game stint as an assistant on the Kraken bench for a preseason game against Calgary last September.

Bylsma noted Campbell’s work in developing the likes of Ryker Evans, Shane Wright and Tye Kartye — all important players for the Kraken moving forward — while at Coachella Valley as part of the reason he wanted to bring her to Seattle.

“Tye Kartye did the work. It’s all on Tye, but it’s with Jessica’s guidance. She’s grown, she’s demonstrated that over the last two years so it makes me eager for her to get a chance to do it at the NHL level,” Bylsma said.

Along with Campbell, the Kraken filled another spot on the coaching staff by hiring Bob Woods as one of Bylsma’s assistants. Woods was an assistant with Minnesota since 2017, but was let go when Dean Evason was fired as head coach early last season.

Assistant coach Dave Lowry, goaltending coach Steve Briere, video coach Tim Ohashi and video assistant Brady Morgan complete the rest of the coaching staff.

## Ex-players file suit against NCAA over use of likenesses

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — Kansas stars Mario Chalmers and Sherron Collins are among 16 former men’s college basketball players who have sued the NCAA and multiple conferences, claiming they are profiting from the unauthorized use of their names, images and likenesses in promoting and monetizing the March Madness tournament.

Chalmers hit a 3-pointer with 2.1 seconds left to force overtime in the 2008 national championship game against Memphis on the way to the title. The lawsuit says the NCAA and Turner Sports Interactive — another defendant — have profited from replaying Chalmers’ shot without paying him.

The Big East, Pac-12, Big Ten, Big12, SEC and ACC are also defendants in the class-action lawsuit, filed Monday in the U.S. District

Court in the Southern District of New York.

“The NCAA has conspired with conferences, colleges, licensing companies and apparel companies to fix the price of student-athlete labor near zero and make student-athletes unwitting and uncompensated lifetime pitchmen for the NCAA,” the lawsuit states.

The suit said March Madness generates close to \$1 billion in annual revenue for the NCAA, but none has gone to the plaintiffs, who are seeking unspecified damages.

“The NCAA’s illegal conduct has damaged plaintiffs by diminishing their opportunity to maximize their compensation for their publicity rights, including their rights related to images related to the most profitable portion of NCAA’s revenue, basketball,” the suit says. “The full amount of this

damage is currently unknown, and it continues to increase as the NCAA and its affiliates and co-conspirators continue to profit from the NCAA’s ongoing, uninterrupted usurpation of plaintiffs’ and class members publicity rights.”

An NCAA spokesperson declined comment Wednesday. The organization is already facing a number of federal lawsuits challenging its longstanding amateurism model and the case comes amid dramatic changes that cleared the way for compensation of athletes.

Other plaintiffs include Ryan Boatright (Connecticut), A.J. Bramlett, Eugene Edgerson and Jason Terry (Arizona), James Cunningham (Arizona State and Tulsa), Alex Oriakhi (Connecticut and Missouri) and Matt Pressey (Missouri).

# US shooting for medal in rugby sevens

*Associated Press*

The anthem played as Army officer Sammy Sullivan stood at attention, saluting, beside her United States rugby teammates before the final of the Hong Kong Sevens.

Sometimes, like all of us, her mind drifts. So no prizes for guessing another big occasion Sullivan may have strayed to: Paris in July, playing for an Olympic medal.

"I do let myself think about that sometimes," Sullivan said. "But for the most part, it's so important to just try to be in the present and focus on the next task."

The next major task for Sullivan and her Eagles teammates is a medal. It's a collective ambition for U.S. players including Perry Baker, a two-time men's world sevens player of the year.

Despite being competitive in the annual men's and women's world series, the U.S. hasn't won an Olympic medal in rugby sevens since it was introduced to the program at Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

At Tokyo three years ago, the U.S. teams crashed out in quarterfinal losses to Britain — the women despite topping a group that contained 2016 champion Australia; the men after entering the Olympics as the No. 2-ranked team.

Making amends for that is at the top of

the list of Paris goals for Iona Maher, the breakout social media star on TikTok at the Tokyo Olympics.

"We're kind of learning how important it is to put yourself in the best position during every pool game, during quarterfinals," Maher says. "We're doing whatever we can, because I think a medal would be amazing for us, for our program, and for rugby as a sport in the U.S."

"America loves success — they love seeing people win and that would bring more people to us."

A recruitment theme is part of the process for Sullivan, too. Her father played rugby in the military, but Sullivan didn't pick it up until she started at West Point.

After being commissioned as an engineer officer in the Army, she was selected for a national rugby squad. That led her into the World Class Athlete program, which allows soldiers to compete in the Olympics as their active duty military job.

So that run to the final in April in Hong Kong, the spiritual home of rugby sevens, was an occasion to celebrate.

"I've always had a really strong sense of honor," Sullivan says. "To salute and to show my pride for not only being an American but being an American soldier ... it does make me emotional."

The Americans lost that final to reigning Olympic champion New Zealand. The U.S. women finished the world series in fourth place in the league stage, the highlights including the second place in Hong Kong and third in Los Angeles.

Australia, the 2016 Olympic champion, won the series finale in Madrid in June to claim the women's championship, beating New Zealand in the semis.

The New Zealanders treated the Hong Kong campaign as a rehearsal for their Olympic title defense.

For the Americans, it was part of their tapering after using the event in Los Angeles, where the 2028 Olympics will be staged, as their major trial run for Paris.

"We didn't have exactly the result we wanted with third place there," Sullivan says, "but if you think about it like a graph, that was one of our peaks and we're only trying to grow from there."

When she finalized the U.S. Olympic women's squad last week, head coach Emilie Bydwell said the goal in Paris is "to move the jersey forward, leaving a legacy ... and to deliver a performance that inspires American fans."

For co-captain Lauren Doyle, that means one thing: "Gold is definitely the goal. And we do have things in motion to get to that."

# Time running out for German soccer great Kroos

*Associated Press*

BERLIN — Germany great Toni Kroos hopes the next game isn't his last.

Heavyweights Germany and Spain clash at the European Championship on Friday, when the winner will advance to the semifinals.

Kroos is ending his playing career after Germany's last game at Euro 2024. He hopes that will be the final in Berlin's Olympiastadion. But he knows it could be as soon as Friday if Spain — the most impressive team so far — knocks out the host nation in Stuttgart.

"I'm not nostalgic at all," Kroos said Wednesday at potentially his last press conference as a player. He said he wasn't assuming Spain "will be my last

game. So, I think we can all look forward to seeing each other again."

Kroos has played a key role in lifting the pre-tournament gloom surrounding the German team and turning it to optimism that the hosts can go on to win Euro 2024. It would be a fitting sendoff for a player who has already signed off on a glittering club career by winning the Champions League and Spanish league with Real Madrid.

"It's pretty difficult to plan a European Championship title but having it as a goal is of course the case," Kroos said. "I think it will be really difficult to finish more successfully than I left it with Madrid. And now of course I'm trying to do the same here."

Kroos retired from the nation-

al team already in 2021, after Germany lost to England in the last 16 of the pandemic-delayed Euro 2020 tournament. But one of the first things Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann did after his appointment in September 2023 was ask the cool-headed midfielder if he'd consider returning to help Germany's title bid in its home tournament.

Fortunately for Germany — which was really struggling with two defeats and a draw from Nagelsmann's first four games — Kroos said yes.

It's arguably the single biggest factor in the team's upturn as Kroos' experience and calmness under pressure gave confidence to the players around him.

The 34-year-old returned to help Germany beat France and the Netherlands in friendlies in March, and Greece before Euro 2024, then he helped Germany progress from the group stage with wins over Scotland and Hungary, and a draw with Switzerland.

Kroos maintained a calm, assured presence in a turbulent win over Denmark in the last 16, helping Germany get further than it had in the last edition.

"We're now finally in the stages of the tournament that we really wanted to be in, and we can be happy with that," Kroos said. "We're motivated, however, in the team and in the locker room, to get much further. And we're convinced we can manage that."