

## Biden delivers call to defend democracy

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Wednesday delivered a solemn call to voters to defend the country's democracy as he laid out in an Oval Office address his decision to drop his bid for reelection and throw his support behind Vice President Kamala Harris.

Insisting that "the defense of democracy is more important than any title," Biden used his first public address since his announcement Sunday that he was stepping aside to deliver an implicit repudiation of former President Donald Trump. He did not directly call out Trump, whom he has called an existential threat to democracy.

The 10-minute address also gave Biden a chance to try to shape how history will remember his one and only term in office.

"Nothing, nothing can come in the way of saving our democracy," Biden said, in a somber coda to his 50 years spent in public office. "And that includes

personal ambition."

It was a moment for the history books — a U.S. president reflecting before the nation on why he was taking the rare step of voluntarily handing off power. It hasn't been done since 1968, when Lyndon Johnson announced he would not seek reelection in the heat of the Vietnam War.

"I revere this office," Biden said. "But I love my country more."

Trump, just an hour earlier at a campaign rally, revived his baseless claims of voter fraud in the 2020 presidential election, which he lost to Biden. His refusal to concede inspired the Capitol insurrection of Jan. 6, 2021, which Biden called "the worst attack on our democracy since the Civil War."

Biden skirted the political reality that brought him to that point: His abysmal performance in a debate against Trump nearly a month ago, where he spoke haltingly, appeared ashen and failed to rebut

his predecessor's attacks, sparked a crisis of confidence from Democrats.

Lawmakers and ordinary voters questioned not just whether he was capable of beating Trump in November, but also whether, at 81, he was still fit for the high-pressure job.

Biden, who said he believed his record was deserving of another term in office, tried to outlast the skepticism and quell the concerns with interviews and tepid rallies, but the pressure to end his campaign only mounted from the party's political elites and from ordinary voters.

"I have decided the best way forward is to pass the torch to a new generation," Biden said, saying he wanted to make room for "fresh voices, yes, younger voices."

He added, "That is the best way to unite our nation."

It was a belated fulfillment of his 2020 pledge to be a bridge to a new generation of leaders — and a bow to the drumbeat of calls from within his party to

step aside.

Biden's address was carried live by the major broadcast and cable news networks. He spooled out an weighty to-do list for his last six months in office, pledging to remain focused on being president until his term expires at noon on Jan. 20, 2025. He said he would work to end the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, fight to boost government support to cure cancer, address climate change and push for Supreme Court reform.

The president sought to use the address to outline the stakes in the election, which both Biden and Harris have framed as a choice between freedom and chaos, but he tried to steer clear of overt campaigning from his official office.

"The great thing about America is here, kings and dictators do not rule," Biden said. "The people do. History is in your hands. The power is in your hands. The idea of America — lies in your hands."

## CDC loosens rabies rules for bringing dogs to US

**BY KELLY AGEE**  
*Stars and Stripes*

Due to public outcry, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has eased restrictions on dogs coming into the United States from countries with low or no risk of rabies.

The CDC announced Monday that it will require just one form from dog owners entering the U.S. with their pets instead of a package of documents it set forth earlier this month in new regulations.

"These updates incorporate the feedback received from the public, industry partners, and

various countries on the dog importation rule, and clarify and simplify the processes for those bringing dogs from dog rabies-free or low-risk countries," the CDC's official website states.

The rules will still take effect Aug. 1, the tail end of the military's busy season for permanent changes of duty stations, which typically occurs from May to August.

Under the latest revisions, dogs that have spent the previous six months in a country free of or at low risk for canine rabies will need only the free CDC Dog Import Form available on-

line.

The pet owner may complete the form on the day of travel, according to the CDC's website. The document may be printed or shown on a phone screen to U.S. customs officials or airline representatives.

Dogs still must be microchipped and at least 6 months old at time of entry to the U.S. and appear healthy upon arrival.

Meeting all the new requirements to bring a dog into the U.S. can be pricey. To obtain a health certificate, dogs may undergo preliminary require-

ments, including microchipping, vaccinations and bloodwork, according to Pet Relocation, an international pet transportation company.

On average, pet owners may expect to pay between \$50 and \$200 for those services, Pet Relocation states on its website.

Finally, the dog must undergo a veterinary exam to complete the health certificate, another \$50 to \$200.

The CDC provides a list of high-risk countries on its website. If the country is not listed, it is considered low risk or free of canine rabies.

# Marines set to back Manila in skirmish

By SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

MOUNT BUNDEY TRAINING AREA, Australia — A Marine rotational force in northern Australia is ready to back up the Philippines in clashes with China over disputed territory in the South China Sea, according to the force's commander.

"We were given a warning order to support the Philippines defense forces in resupplying of the Second Thomas Shoal," Marine Rotational Force — Darwin commander Col. Brian Mulvihill said Wednesday at an Outback training camp in the Northern Territory.

Mulvihill, a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, commands 2,000 Marines in the territory. He said members of the rotational force have been in the Philippines for extended periods this year for the Balikatan, Valiant Shield and Marine Aviation Support Activity exercises.

Clashes between Filipino and Chinese forces at the shoal have intensified in recent months. The

Chinese coast guard has interrupted Filipino navy and coast guard efforts to resupply troops on the grounded BRP Sierra Madre. The rusted warship houses a garrison to reinforce the Philippines' claim to the shoal.

Beijing and Manila agreed Sunday to deescalate at the shoal without conceding either side's territorial claims, according to statements from both country's foreign ministries reported by The Associated Press that day.

The Marines have been monitoring events at the shoal over a drone feed, Mulvihill said.

"We were ready to support the Philippine defense forces," he said, noting that Marines across the Pacific are also ready to back the U.S. ally.

The rotational force can airlift food and water by pushing pallets out of helicopters, he added.

"We can control airspace and aircraft from many nations," he said. "We provide a range of options if a host nation, through the embassy, requires assistance."

The rotational force was also

ready to support Papua New Guinea after a deadly May 24 landslide that buried hundreds of people. Marines were in the islands earlier that month, but local officials did not ask for their help, Mulvihill said.

Marine Rotational Force — Darwin has evolved from a unit that trains with its counterparts to a crisis-response force under the Hawaii-based U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, he said.

"Anything we do here, we are partnered with another military," he said. "In order to create stability in the region we need to partner with the forces that live here and know the region better than we do."

The force sent Marines and sailors to the Micronesian island of Nauru in May and June for Operation Render Safe, an Australian-led effort to clear explosives dating to World War II from Oceania, Mulvihill said.

The bomb-disposal crews, along with medical personnel, will fly to the Solomon Islands on MV-22 Osprey aircraft to per-

form the same mission from August to September, he said.

Three Marines attached to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 363 and deployed with the previous rotation to Darwin died after their MV-22B Osprey crashed on Melville Island, part of the Tiwi Islands, Aug. 4, 2023.

Darwin is an excellent platform for launching forces into Southeast Asia, according to Grant Newsham, a retired Marine colonel and senior researcher with the Japan Forum for Strategic Studies in Tokyo.

"It's good to see Darwin and Northern Territory being used this way ... rather than just as a training area for Marines, Air Force, and Australian and other forces," he said by email Thursday.

The Marines can offer the Philippines fire support coordination. They can help with logistics and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and guard locations that support Philippine forces operating towards the disputed shoal, he said.

## Chinese students who flew drone over carrier questioned

By YOO KYONG CHANG  
*Stars and Stripes*

South Korean police questioned three Chinese students who used a drone to record panoramic views of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt at Busan in June, a Busan Metropolitan Police officer said Thursday.

The three were suspected of illegally recording video of the carrier and South Korean Naval Operations Command on June 23 and June 25, the police officer said.

The students, who police described as being in their 30s or 40s, were questioned and released but remain under investigation, the officer said.

South Korean government officials customarily speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

The carrier arrived in Busan on June 22 ahead of Freedom Edge, several days of maritime exercises with warships of the South Korean and Japanese navies.

The three, students at a Busan university, are suspected of violating the Protection of Military Bases and Installations Act, which outlaws photographing military installations and equipment without approval from the unit or base commander, according to police. The officer did not identify the three by name, citing privacy concerns.

At 12:11 p.m., a South Korean army officer on security duty discovered the three students operating a drone on a hill in Busan and held them for police, a South Korean navy spokesman said Thursday.

The hill is popular with Busan locals as a lookout point, the police officer said.

"There is a viewing platform giving stunning views over the hill," he said. "So, it is almost always crowded."

The students had parked their car nearby and taken the drone, which they told police they carry in the car, with them to the hill, the officer said. Police confiscated the drone and in it found about five minutes of footage of

the carrier and naval base.

The three told police they took the footage only out of curiosity, the Busan officer said.

Police also confiscated their cellphones before releasing them and are reviewing their records. The three are not suspected of espionage, a police detective said Thursday.

U.S. authorities have not inquired about the incident, the police officer said.

The naval base typically increases security when U.S. assets arrive, the navy spokesman said, but this incident may prompt a tightening of those measures. He said the drone did not appear in any surveillance video at the base.

# Netanyahu vows 'total victory' in Gaza

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged in a scathing speech to Congress on Wednesday to achieve “total victory” against Hamas and denounced American opponents of the war in Gaza as “idiots,” taking a combative stance in a visit the Biden administration has hoped will yield progress in negotiations to end the fighting.

Netanyahu used the high-profile address to a joint meeting of Congress to emphasize long-standing and close ties between the United States and Israel. But the speech put in sharp relief the divisions in American society stirred by the war, with dozens of Democratic lawmakers boy-

cotting the address and thousands of protesters outside the Capitol condemning the war and the humanitarian crisis created by it.

Some of the protests near the Capitol turned chaotic. That included one within a few hundred yards of the tightly guarded Capitol grounds, at Union Station, where protesters spray-painted marble statuary and replaced American flags with Palestinian ones. Officers on streets surrounding the Capitol brawled with demonstrators, swinging batons and spraying tear gas.

Speaking for nearly an hour to frequent applause from U.S. lawmakers, as well as stony silence from many leading Democrats, Netanyahu said the U.S.

has a shared interest in his country's fight against Hamas and other Iran-backed armed groups.

“America and Israel must stand together. When we stand together something really simple happens: We win, they lose,” said Netanyahu, who wore a yellow pin expressing solidarity with the Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

But the Israeli leader soon pivoted to a darker tone as he derided those protesting the war on college campuses and elsewhere in the U.S., gesturing to demonstrations happening on the streets outside the Capitol. He called protesters “useful idiots” for Israel's adversaries.

Netanyahu — making his first

trip abroad since the war started — made no direct mention of months of U.S.-led mediation for a cease-fire and hostage-release. His remarks did not appear to close the door on a deal but showed no sign he was eager for one.

“Israel will fight until we destroy Hamas's military capabilities and its rule in Gaza and bring all our hostages home,” he said. “That's what total victory means. And we will settle for nothing less.”

Netanyahu was scheduled to meet with President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris on Thursday, and with former President Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago on Friday.

## Trump turns full focus on Harris

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Donald Trump unleashed a barrage of attack lines Wednesday against his likely new opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris, whom he called his “new victim to defeat” and accused of deceiving the public about President Joe Biden's ability to run for a second term.

The rally in Charlotte, N.C., marked his first public campaign event since Biden dropped out of the 2024 match-up and Harris became the Democrats' likely nominee. The rally concluded minutes before Biden addressed the nation to explain he dropped his reelection bid to “pass the torch” to Harris, who is 22 years younger than him.

“So now we have a new victim to defeat: Lyin' Kamala Harris,” Trump said, labeling her “the most incompetent and far-left vice president in American history.”

Trump called her a “radical left lunatic” and said she was “crazy” for her positions on abortion and immigration. He

repeatedly mispronounced the first name of the first Black woman and person of South Asian descent likely to lead a major party's presidential ticket.

Trump's speech signaled the next stage for the campaign may be especially brutal and personal, even as some GOP leaders warned Republican allies not to use overtly racist and sexist attacks against Harris.

Trump has ramped up his criticism of the vice president since Biden's abrupt departure, calling Harris “the same as Biden but much more radical.”

He blamed her for what he portrays as the Biden administration's failures, particularly security along the U.S.-Mexico border. On Wednesday, the speakers who appeared on stage before the Republican nominee attacked Harris' record on the border, highlighting she was tasked with leading a White House effort to tackle migration issues. Harris' name was met with boos several times during the speeches.

“She was assigned that, she was given that task, and she

failed,” said Brandon Judd, former president of the National Border Patrol Council, the union that represents agents.

Trump also accused Harris of being just as responsible for Biden's policies at the U.S.-Mexico border, which saw illegal crossing arrests reach record highs at the end of 2023 and repeated his pledge to conduct mass deportations with the help of local police.

“Kamala's deadly destruction of America's borders is completely and totally disqualifying. She shouldn't be allowed to run for president with what she's done,” Trump told supporters.

Harris, meanwhile, spent Wednesday in Indiana, telling members of the historically Black sorority Zeta Phi Beta that “we are not playing around” and asked for their help in electing her president in November, an election she characterized as “a choice between two different visions for our nation, one focused on the future, the other focused on the past.”

## Publisher set to reprint Vance's book

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Former President Donald Trump's selection of J.D. Vance as his running mate has led to a surge in sales for “Hillbilly Elegy,” his best-selling memoir that came out in 2016.

A spokesperson for HarperCollins told The Associated Press that more than 600,000 copies have been sold since Trump's announcement on July 15. The total includes physical books, audiobooks and e-books.

“We are printing hundreds of thousands of copies to fill the demand at our retail partners,” the publisher announced Thursday.

Vance's book already was a million seller before Trump chose him for the Republican ticket. “Hillbilly Elegy,” which Ron Howard adapted into a feature film released in 2020, tells of Vance's childhood in Ohio and his family's roots in rural Kentucky.



# Wildfires prompt evacuations in northern Calif.

Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — Rapidly growing wildfires prompted evacuations in Northern California on Thursday, a day after powerful winds and lightning strikes in Oregon and Idaho cut power and stoked fires, including one in Oregon that was the largest active blaze in the United States. Another fast-moving wildfire forced thousands to abandon a town in Canada.

Evacuations were ordered in California's Butte and Tehama counties as crews battled a fire reported near Chico just before 3 p.m. Wednesday. The blaze, dubbed the Park Fire, quickly spread from about 10 square miles to more than 70 square

miles and was only 3% contained early Thursday, according to CALFIRE. The cause was under investigation.

Fire personnel were focusing on evacuations and defending structures while using bulldozers to build containment lines. No deaths or damage to structures had been reported, CAL FIRE/Butte County Fire Department said in a late Wednesday update.

Fires in several western states and Canada have forced some areas to declare air quality alerts or advisories as skies filled with smoke and haze. In the Canadian Rockies' largest national park, a fast-moving wildfire this week hit the town of

Jasper, forcing thousands to flee and causing significant damage.

The Durkee Fire, burning near the Oregon-Idaho border about 130 miles west of Boise, Idaho, caused the closure of a stretch of Interstate 84 again Wednesday. Amid rapidly forming storms in the afternoon, the blaze crossed the interstate near the town of Huntington, home to about 500.

"The wildfires in Eastern Oregon have scaled up quickly," Kotek said in a news release Wednesday evening, calling it a dynamic situation. "We are facing strong erratic winds over the region that could impact all fires. Rain is not getting through. Some communities do

not have power."

Kotek said she had deployed the National Guard to the region. The Oregon State Fire Marshal's office also mobilized nearly 500 firefighters to help protect communities at risk.

The nearly 420-square-mile blaze had prompted the evacuation of Huntington on Sunday, and city officials Wednesday posted on Facebook that people remaining in town, especially those with "major health issues," needed to leave their homes because of wildfire smoke and the lack of power. City officials also said Wednesday that gas service to residents had been shut off until the evacuation orders are lifted.

## Uvalde school police officer pleads not guilty to charges

Associated Press

UVALDE, Texas — A former Uvalde, Texas, school police officer who was part of the slow law enforcement response to the 2022 mass shooting at Robb Elementary School pleaded not guilty during a court appearance Thursday.

Adrian Gonzales was one of the nearly 400 law enforcement personnel who responded to the scene but then waited more than 70 minutes to confront the shooter inside the school.

Teary-eyed family members were in the courtroom in the small Texas town to watch as Gonzales was arraigned on charges of abandoning and failing to protect children who were killed and wounded.

Some of the victims' families have spent over two years pressing for officers to face charges after 19 children and two teachers were killed inside the fourth grade classroom. Some have called for more officers to be charged.

"For only two to be indicted, there should have been more

because there was a lot of ranking officers during that day that knew what to do but decided not to. But they only got these two," Jerry Mata, whose 10-year-old daughter Tess was killed, said after the hearing.

"We'll take what we get and we're just gonna continue fighting for the kids and the two teachers and see it all the way through," Mata said.

Gonzales and former Uvalde schools police Chief Pete Arredondo were indicted by a grand jury in June. Arredondo waived his arraignment and entered a not guilty plea on July 10. Both were released on bond following their indictments.

Prior to the hearing, Gonzales' attorney had called the charges "unprecedented in the state of Texas."

Gonzales, 51, was among the first officers to arrive at the school. He was indicted on 29 charges that accuse him of abandoning his training and not confronting the shooter, even after hearing gunshots as he stood in a hallway.

## Newsom issues order to clear out homeless encampments

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California Gov. Gavin Newsom issued an executive order Thursday for the removal of homeless encampments in his state.

Newsom's order would direct state agencies on how to remove the thousands of tents and makeshift shelters across the state that line freeways, clutter shopping center parking lots and fill city parks. The order makes clear that the decision to remove the encampments remains in the hands of local authorities.

The guidance comes after a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court earlier this summer allowing cities to enforce bans on sleeping outside in public spaces. The case was the most significant on the issue to come before the high court in decades and comes as cities across the country have wrestled with the politically complicated issue of how to deal with a rising number of people without a permanent place to live and public frus-

tration over related health and safety issues.

"We must act with urgency to address dangerous encampments," Newsom said in a statement.

While Newsom cannot order local authorities to act, his administration can apply pressure by withholding money for counties and cities.

Newsom has made homelessness a signature issue as California governor. He pushed and campaigned for a ballot measure earlier this year to allow the state to borrow nearly \$6.4 billion to build 4,350 housing units.

The order comes as Republicans have stepped up their criticisms of California and its homelessness crisis as Vice President Kamala Harris — a former California district attorney, attorney general and senator — launches her presidential campaign. Harris entered the race over the weekend after President Joe Biden's announced that he would not seek reelection.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## City police set to install gun scanners in subway

**NY** NEW YORK — The NYPD will install gun-scanning metal detectors at a select few city subway stations later this week, Mayor Eric Adams announced, brushing off criticism from civil rights advocates who have questioned the efficacy of the technology.

In an afternoon news conference at City Hall, Adams said the detectors, produced by a company called Evolv Technology, will be rolled out “Thursday or Friday” at a handful of subway turnstiles as part of a pilot program.

“I think this is going to become the norm for us,” said Adams, a retired NYPD captain who has made using new surveillance tech a cornerstone of his public safety agenda.

Adams didn’t say which stations will see the detectors, how long the pilot will run or how much it is expected to cost.

## Nursing home owner gets probation

**LA** NEW ORLEANS — A Louisiana businessman who sent more than 800 elderly residents from his seven nursing homes to ride out Hurricane Ida in a crowded, ill-equipped warehouse pleaded no contest to 15 criminal counts and was sentenced to three years of probation.

Bob Dean Jr. also must pay more than \$358,000 in restitution to the state health department and more than \$1 million as a monetary penalty, but state Attorney General Liz Murrill expressed frustration in a news release that Dean didn’t get any

prison time.

Dean, 70, owned seven nursing homes in New Orleans and southeast Louisiana. As Ida approached, Dean moved hundreds of residents into a building in the town of Independence, roughly 70 miles northwest of New Orleans.

Authorities said conditions at the warehouse deteriorated rapidly after the powerful storm hit on Aug. 29, 2021. They found ill and elderly bedridden people on mattresses on the wet floor, some crying for help, some lying in their own waste.

## Release halted after conviction overturned

**MO** ST. LOUIS — The Missouri Supreme Court halted the immediate release Wednesday of a man whose murder conviction was overturned — just as the man was about to walk free.

A St. Louis Circuit Court judge had ordered Christopher Dunn, now 52, to be released by 6 p.m. CDT Wednesday and threatened the prison warden with contempt if Dunn remained imprisoned. But Republican Attorney General Andrew Bailey has been fighting Dunn’s release.

Dunn was convicted of first-degree murder in the 1990 shooting of 15-year-old Ricco Rogers. St. Louis Circuit Attorney Gabe Gore filed a motion in February seeking to vacate the guilty verdict.

St. Louis Circuit Judge Jason Sengheiser overturned Dunn’s murder conviction Monday and ordered his immediate release. Bailey appealed, and the state Department of Corrections declined to release Dunn.

## Woman gets probation for hoax bomb threat

**MA** BOSTON — A Massachusetts woman has been sentenced to three years of probation for calling in a fake bomb threat at Boston Children’s Hospital as it faced a barrage of harassment over its surgical program for transgender youths.

Catherine Leavy pleaded guilty last year in federal court to charges including making a false bomb threat. Authorities said the threat was made in August 2022 as the hospital was facing an onslaught of threats and harassment. The hospital launched the country’s first pediatric and adolescent transgender health program.

The hospital became the focus of far-right media after they found informational YouTube videos published by the hospital about surgical offerings for transgender patients.

The caller said: “There is a bomb on the way to the hospital, you better evacuate everybody you sickos,” according to court documents. The threat resulted in a lockdown of the hospital. No explosives were found.

## Panel: Remove judge for profane rant

**NY** NEW YORK — A state judge who engaged in a prolonged, offensive rant after a melee erupted at a high school graduation party should be removed from office, a judicial watchdog panel ruled.

State Supreme Court Justice Erin Gall, 53, invoked her authority as a judge to try to get uninvited guests arrested, threatened to shoot Black teenagers

and bragged that her 18-year-old son had “put the smack-down” on another partygoer, the state Commission on Judicial Conduct said in its report.

The commission found that Gall, a white Republican who has served as an elected judge in Oneida County since 2012, “created at least the appearance that she harbored racial bias,” which could undermine confidence in her integrity.

## Inmate on death row gets life in prison

**SC** COLUMBIA — A man who spent nearly two decades on South Carolina’s death row for killing two people has been granted life in prison without parole two years after a federal court overturned his original sentence, news outlets reported.

A Lexington County judge signed off on the deal for Quincy Allen.

In 2002, Allen killed four people: a woman he picked up on a street in Columbia; a man who was in the restaurant where Allen worked; and two men at a Surry County, N.C., convenience store. He was sentenced to death for the South Carolina slayings. He pleaded guilty to the North Carolina killings and was sentenced to life in prison.

A federal appeals court overturned his death sentence in 2022, saying the judge who ordered his execution ignored psychiatric problems stemming from a mother who started kicking him out of the house when he was in fourth grade and a stepfather who pointed an empty gun at his head and pulled the trigger.

— From Associated Press

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# US boxer Gonzalez fulfills Olympic dream

Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Jajaira Gonzalez was scrolling through social media at her job in a Virginia kickboxing gym about three years ago when she spotted some of her former USA Boxing teammates traveling the world, competing for medals and generally living their best lives.

The Instagram post hit Gonzalez like a stiff jab, snapping her out of a quarter-life slumber.

“They were in the water in Spain, and I was suddenly like, ‘I should be there,’” she said. “What am I doing here? Like, I’m fat. I haven’t worked out. I haven’t been to the gym in a long

time. I was like: ‘I need to change my life. I need to get back to my life.’ I wasn’t born to just be doing this regular job. I’m supposed to travel the world doing what I love.”

Gonzalez was once the most promising amateur female boxer in the United States — a teenage prodigy with power, endless stamina and ample skill from years of sparring with her older brothers while training under their demanding father, Jose. Three of her brothers — Joet, Jousce and Jonjairo — have since fought professionally.

But Jajaira fell agonizingly short of a trip to the Rio de Janeiro Olympics, losing a narrow decision in her final fight for a

spot on the U.S. team in late 2015.

The fire inside Gonzalez dimmed to an ember in the next half-decade as she navigated depression, a high-profile relationship, an ill-advised stint in the Army and an anxiety-laced malaise familiar to many whose adolescent dreams just never came true.

“Boxing was everything to me at the time,” Gonzalez said. “After that, I didn’t really care for it. That definitely shifted my focus.”

By 2021, Gonzalez had been out of boxing for about four years. She was estranged from some members of her Southern California family and stranded

on the wrong side of the continent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With one look at her ex-teammates living it up on social media, the flame roared back to life.

She moved back out west and got back in the gym. She reconciled with most of her family and rededicated her life to boxing.

Several years after she gave up on her dream, and less than two years after she started over, Gonzalez qualified for the Paris Olympics.

Now 27, Gonzalez has transformed herself into a clear contender with strong medal chances.

## Army coaches help next generation of US athletes

BY MATT WAGNER

*Stars and Stripes*

Army Master Sgt. Dennis Bowsher may have officially hung up his saber and riding boots more than a decade ago. But he’s still representing the United States on the international sports stage.

The one-time Olympian in the modern pentathlon has shifted from competitor to coach. The 41-year-old is entering his third Summer Games as a member of the U.S. coaching staff, after appearances as an assistant in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 and in Tokyo in 2021.

Bowsher said even though he’s not on the field of play, he still feels the same on the sidelines.

“We are a little bit behind the scenes because all the focus is on the athlete, but there’s that sense of pride representing Team USA and the military when you’re going to these international competitions,” Bowsher said.

The Dallas native is one of two active-duty soldiers who will coach U.S. Olympians in Paris for the 2024 Olympic Games, which begin Friday and end Aug. 11. Sgt. 1st Class Spenser Mango is mentoring Greco-Roman wrestlers for the second Olympic Games after being on the U.S. staff in Tokyo.

Both Bowsher and Mango are members of the Army’s World Class Athlete Program.

Mango almost seemed to make the transition seamlessly. The St. Louis native has been named USA Wrestling’s Greco-Roman Coach of the Year four times — 2018, ’21, ’22 and ’23.

In a phone interview, he spoke of going to camps, international tournaments and training to help however he could, earning the trust of athletes and U.S. Olympic officials in the process.

“After all of these years now, they felt like I would be a good asset to the delegation,” Mango said.

Having Olympic experience lends both Mango and Bowsher credence as coaches.

Mango competed in Beijing in 2008, placing eighth at 55 kilograms, and in London in 2012, finishing ninth in the same weight class. The Northern Michigan graduate won seven U.S. Open titles, earned a bronze medal at the 2006 Junior World championships and took a 2007 University World crown.

Bowsher, meanwhile, took a successful high school swimming career — he was a three-time all-state swimmer — and added fencing, equestrian, shooting and running to his repertoire for the modern pentathlon. He scored Junior National titles in 2003 and 2004 and a U.S. championship in 2005 before joining the Army.

He reached the pinnacle of the sport in London, qualifying for the Olympics. He finished 32nd in those Games.

“I can share my experience for what it took for me to get there and also what those events are going to be like,” Bowsher said. “Sometimes a lot of first-timers can be overwhelmed, so I can kind of guide them through that process or the events because it can be a lot more distractions going on.”

Both Mango and Bowsher understand the pressure of the competition — and want to take as much as they can off the athletes.

“Mentally, I feel like it’s just as taxing, sometimes even more taxing as a coach just because you’re stressing over everything, trying to make sure you can take some of the stress away from the athlete competing,” Mango said. “It’s definitely a different kind of stress involved, but I’m happy to be able to do it.”

Bowsher has only one charge in Paris: Jess Savner. The 32-year-old from Connecticut is ranked 69th in the world, according to the Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne.

Mango, meanwhile, has four athletes, including Spc. Kamal Bey at 77 kilograms. Also on the U.S. Greco-Roman squad are Payton Jacobson (87 kilograms), Joe Rau (97) and Adam Coon (130).

The coach said the late addition of Bey, who received a bid at the end of June, gives him a boost heading into Paris.

“We’re super excited,” Mango said. “Now we’re trying to make the most of the situation we’re in.”



# Army's Sullivan is set to star in rugby

*Stars and Stripes*

U.S. Army Capt. Sammy Sullivan entered the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 2016, hoping to play soccer.

But the Fayetteville, N.C., native didn't make the team. So she went to Army women's rugby by coach Bill LeClerc and asked for a tryout, despite having never played the sport.

About eight years later, Sullivan will step onto the field at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, France, on Sunday as a member of the U.S. women's rugby sevens squad in the Olympics.

"Bill says this quote: 'Sam needed rugby, and rugby needed Sam,'" Sullivan said.

"Kind of from the get-go, I fell in love with it," Sullivan said. "The controlled violence was appealing to me just because it was a sport meant for that and everyone was on the same page about that."

Sullivan has made herself a staple for the Eagles in her short time at the Chula Vista Elite Athletic Training Center in California — a remote station from the Army's World Class Athlete Program based in Fort Carson, Colo.

The 26-year-old edge prop made her first U.S. rugby sevens squad during the 2022 World Cup in Cape Town, South Africa, but she didn't debut officially until Dec. 2 of that year at the World Rugby Sevens Series tournament in Dubai.

Since then, Sullivan has collected 14 international appearances and is well into double digits in tries — a score earned by grounding the ball in the opponent's goal area. She recorded her first try in the first minute of a 12-7 win over Canada in Dubai.

She tries to lock down her position with speed and physicality, she said.

Sullivan said she was confident she showed enough to make the Olympic roster before the official announcement in June. She described herself as a "14-minute player," referencing the length of a full rugby sevens match.

"Going into Olympic selections, I felt like I did everything within my realm that I could do to make it," Sullivan said. "So when the team was named, I blew a sigh of relief and was a little excited but then instantly nervous. Now, it's about performing in Paris."

The 2024 Paris Games was the plan when U.S. coach Emilie Bydwell originally offered Sullivan an SUA Rugby residency spot in December 2019 when she was still a senior at West Point.

The daughter of a former Army Special Forces officer who played rugby in college and the Army, Sullivan earned the Prusmack Award that year as the top collegiate sevens player in the United States. Bydwell

saw Sullivan as a player of the future and wanted to bring her in with the Tokyo Olympics scheduled for the summer of 2020.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, delaying the Tokyo Games until 2021. Instead of taking up the residency offer, Sullivan decided to pursue her military career first. She was stationed at Fort Carson, working as a platoon leader while also driving 90 minutes to Denver and back three times per week for rugby practice.

She didn't regret that decision.

"Those moments in Colorado in the freezing winter, doing training exercises with snow 2 feet all around us are some of my favorite memories still," Sullivan said. "I learned a lot about myself and learned that my never-give-up mentality could last outside of organized sport."

Following that assignment, Bydwell presented a USA Rugby residency spot to Sullivan again, and she accepted.

Despite how quickly she has taken to the international game, it hasn't been smooth sailing.

As an enforcer during her soccer days, being physical and running all over the field isn't new to Sullivan. Yet as a member of the team's front line at edge prop, she has found herself playing in scrums and lineouts in situations where she

wasn't comfortable.

Considering teams have maybe 30 seconds to put together a scrum, she said, Sullivan didn't have a lot of time to learn. Still, after a few errors in her first few attempts, she grasped the concepts.

"Our coaches were very patient with me, and I feel like now I got pretty good at it," Sullivan said. "Jumping in a lineup can be nerve-racking sometimes because there's a lot of pressure on you to get the timing right and outsmart the opposing team who's also going to lift someone up and try to get the ball."

As for what she expects when the Games kick off, Sullivan isn't afraid to go after lofty goals: It's gold or bust.

She pointed to a 19-5 victory over France on April 7 in Hong Kong as a reason for optimism. The Eagles bullied the French, whom Sullivan described as "the most violent team" in the women's game.

The hosts, coming off a silver medal in Tokyo, and U.S. square off Monday in the final pool-play match. The two are expected to be in the medal hunt.

"Tiger Woods has a quote that I saw (recently), 'Why show up to a tournament at all if you're not going to win?' That really resonates with me," Sullivan said. "If we perform at our best every game, then we are a gold-medal team."

## Djokovic-Nadal battle could come in the second round

*Associated Press*

PARIS — Top-seeded Novak Djokovic could meet his longtime rival Rafael Nadal in the second round of the Paris Olympic tennis tournament.

Djokovic was drawn Thursday against Australian Matthew Ebden and Nadal faces Hungariaian Marton Fucsovics, with the winners of those matches meeting in Round 2.

The 38-year-old Nadal won a record 14 of his 22 major trophies at the French Open. He won gold in singles at Beijing in 2008,

and in doubles with Marc López at Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

"Roland Garros as everybody knows is the most special place in tennis for me. I am enjoying the fact I am back for the Olympics," Nadal said on stage after the draw. "I am just trying to enjoy every single moment."

French Open champion Carlos Alcaraz takes on Lebanese player Hady Habib.

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek of Poland faces Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania in the first round of the women's draw with second-

seeded American Coco Gauff taking on Australian Ajla Tomljanovic.

Gauff is the reigning U.S. Open champion and is making her Olympic debut. She is a flag bearer for the U.S. team at Friday's opening ceremony along with basketball star LeBron James. She will be the first tennis athlete to carry the U.S. flag.

Djokovic and Swiatek have not won Olympic gold.

Djokovic owns 24 Grand Slam trophies, but his only Olympic medal was bronze at Beijing in 2008.

# Mets, Yankees going in opposite directions

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Subway Series turned into two teams passing in different directions.

After the Mets completed a four-game sweep with a 12-3 rout in the Bronx on Wednesday night, Yankees manager Aaron Boone sounded his most frustrated in two years.

“We’re getting our teeth kicked in,” he said during a question-and-answer session that included a pair of profanities and ended with him telling reporters: “Sorry for using the s-word.”

“Nobody has higher expectations than us in that frickin’ room,” he said. “We’re pissed off. We got to play better. This has gone on long enough. It’s very frustrating to go through, but I also know we’re competing our asses off, and we just got to make sure we continue to walk in with the right level of edge and willingness to compete because no one’s going to pull us out of this but us.”

Francisco Lindor homered twice, and Pete Alonso, Tyrone Taylor and Mark Vientos once each. The Mets finished 4-0 against the Yankees this year for their second Subway Series sweep and first since 2013, outscoring their rival 36-14. The

Mets (53-48) improved to 29-13 after a 24-35 start and are five games over .500 for the first time since April 2023.

“It’s great winning. I love winning,” Lindor said. “The vibes are completely different than when we were losing. Right now we understand that we have a good team and that we have great players and great people in this clubhouse, and we’re all playing for each other.”

The Yankees (60-44) are 10-22 following a 50-22 start and 1-8-2 in their last 11 series after opening 17-3-2. They have yielded 34 homers over 18 games in July and gave up five in a game for the first time in two years.

Asked whether the team’s confidence had been shaken, captain Aaron Judge took a few seconds to think before responding.

“You can read body language sometimes, and there’s some certain times where we’re hanging our head a little bit and you just need a little kick in the butt to get it going again,” he said.

Boone, almost always upbeat and even-keeled, hadn’t sounded this displeased since a 5-2 loss to Toronto on Aug. 20, 2022,

the Yankees’ 20th in 29 games after entering the All-Star break 64-28. He pounded the podium then, making a microphone shake and a water bottle jump.

“It’s no fun going through it. I know how hard this frickin’ game is,” he said. “You take your lumps and it’s it sucks, especially when you know what you’re capable of and you’re taking your lumps for an extended period. It can be rough, but no one’s going to feel sorry for you, that’s for sure, especially when you wearing this uniform.”

“So it’s on us to just make sure we’re nose down, getting after it, walking through those doors every day with an edge and an expectation that today’s the day we can get it rolling,” he added. “And I look forward to going through that with these guys but, again, I’ve said we hold the pen, we’re in control of the story and that has not changed. But we got to play better or it doesn’t matter.”

Taylor, Alonso and Lindor homered off Gerrit Cole (3-2), who allowed six runs and eight hits in 5⅓ innings as his ERA climbed to 5.40. The reigning AL Cy Young Award winner has given up seven home runs

with an 11.17 ERA in a pair of starts against the Mets and two homers with a 3.20 ERA in his other five outings.

When Taylor chased Cole with his third hit, a flare over second baseman Gleyber Torres, the pitcher flipped his glove in the air.

“I’m frustrated,” Cole said, “frustrated sitting in the emotions of this loss, but our job is to flush it and not let the play of the last six weeks affect the way we prepare for the next game. So it’s not like we’re not feeling it.”

In the other clubhouse, Lindor was glowing. After his first homer, a drive into the right field second deck, he stretched into the stands to give gum to 3-year-old daughter Kalina, sitting in the first row on the home plate side of the dugout with 1-year-old sister Amapola and their mom Katia.

“That was really, really cool to be able to see my wife and my daughters and interact with them in the game and just show love to my daughters and my wife,” Lindor said. “She loved it. She was talking the whole entire time. At one point I was like, ‘Baby girl, you got to pay attention to the game. Daddy’s got to work.’”

## NBA signs 11-year TV deal with Disney, NBC, Amazon Prime

Associated Press

The NBA signed its 11-year media rights deal with Disney, NBC and Amazon Prime Video on Wednesday after saying it was not accepting Warner Bros. Discovery’s \$1.8 billion per year offer to continue its longtime relationship with the league.

The media rights deals were approved by the league’s Board of Governors last week and will bring the league about \$76 billion over those 11 years.

WBD had five days to match a part of those deals and said it was exercising its right to do so, but its offer was not considered a true match by the NBA. That means the 2024-25 season will be the last for TNT after a nearly four-decade run — though not long after the NBA signing was announced, WBD said it

would take “appropriate action” and said it believes the NBA has to accept its offer.

“The digital opportunities with Amazon align perfectly with the global interest in the NBA,” Commissioner Adam Silver said in a statement. “And Prime Video’s massive subscriber base will dramatically expand our ability to reach our fans in new and innovative ways.”

Turner Sports strongly disagreed with the NBA’s move, saying it believes the league “grossly misinterpreted our contractual rights.”

“We have matched the Amazon offer, as we have a contractual right to do, and do not believe the NBA can reject it,” TNT Sports said in a statement. “In doing so, they are rejecting the many fans who continue to show

their unwavering support for our best-in-class coverage, delivered through the full combined reach of WBD’s video-first distribution platforms. ... We will take appropriate action.”

Under the new deal, Amazon Prime Video will carry games on Friday nights, select Saturday afternoons and Thursday night doubleheaders that will begin after the conclusion of Prime Video’s “Thursday Night Football” schedule. Prime Video will also take over the NBA League Pass package from WBD.

The new package on Amazon also includes at least one game on Black Friday and the quarterfinals, semifinals and championship game of the league’s in-season tournament, the NBA Cup.