

## Russian warships visit Cuban waters

*Associated Press*

HAVANA — Three Russian warships arrived in Cuban waters on Saturday, Moscow's second such maritime voyage in as many months in a reflection of deepening ties between Russia and Cuba.

The naval group, consisting of a training ship, patrol frigate and refueling tanker, are expected to remain docked in Cuba's port of Havana until Tuesday.

The arrival of the vessels comes mere weeks after another squadron of Russian warships, including a nuclear-powered submarine, visited Havana as part of planned military exercises last month.

American officials closely tracked the mid-June military exercises, saying that the

four-vessel group posed no real threat. At the time, experts described the warships' Caribbean tour as a symbolic show of strength in response to continued U.S. and Western support for Ukraine.

Cuban defense officials announced the latest port call earlier this week, calling the arrival of the Russian warships a "historical practice" and show of "friendship and collaboration." But neither government elaborated on the purpose of this latest deployment.

Cuba greeted the Baltic fleet on Saturday with a booming cannon salute. The docking of the flotilla has sparked a flurry of excitement among the general public, with Cubans strolling the

port avenue to get a better glimpse of the warships Saturday and authorities saying interested visitors would be admitted on board the Russian training ship, called Smolnyi, on Sunday and Monday.

"It's a friendly thing. A bond between Russia and the Cubans," said 29-year-old onlooker Maydelis Perez, pointing the hulking warships out to her three children. "I'm taking a family outing."

Russia is a longtime ally of Venezuela and Cuba, and its warships and aircraft have periodically made forays into the Caribbean and docked in Havana. Though Cuba is not a key player in Russian foreign policy, experts say that Russia sees Cuba — with its port

less than 100 miles from Florida — as strategically important given its continued clout among developing nations.

Cuba and Russia — Cold War allies now both under severe U.S. sanctions — have strengthened their political and economic ties in recent years, particularly as Moscow aims to boost diplomatic support for its war in Ukraine and Havana seeks whatever economic assistance it can get.

Cuba has consistently abstained on U.N. resolutions on the invasion of Ukraine and avoided criticism of Moscow's war. Russia has sold significant volumes of oil to Cuba, which has struggled with regular power outages under Washington's economic embargo.

## Putin vows action over basing of US missiles

*Associated Press*

Russia may deploy new strike weapons in response to the planned U.S. stationing of longer-range and hypersonic missiles in Germany, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday.

Speaking at a naval parade in St Petersburg, Putin vowed "mirror measures" after the U.S. earlier this month announced that it will start deploying the weapons in 2026, to affirm its commitment to NATO and European defense following Moscow's all-out invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

"If the U.S. implements such plans, we will consider ourselves free from the previously imposed unilateral moratorium on the deployment of interme-

diates and shorter-range strike weapons, including increasing the capability of the coastal forces of our navy," Putin said. He added that Moscow's development of suitable systems is "in its final stage."

Both Washington and Moscow have in recent weeks signaled readiness to deploy intermediate-range ground-based weapons that were banned for decades under a 1987 U.S.-Soviet treaty. The U.S. pulled out of the agreement in 2019, accusing Moscow of conducting missile tests that violated it.

The allegations, which Russia denied, came as tensions mounted between Moscow and the West in the wake of the downing of a Malaysian airliner carrying 298 people over

war-torn eastern Ukraine. Two Russians and a pro-Moscow Ukrainian were ultimately convicted over their role in the attack.

Washington and Berlin said in a joint statement this month that the U.S. weapons to be placed in Germany would ultimately include SM-6 missiles, Tomahawk cruise missiles, and "developmental hypersonic weapons", including those with a significantly longer range than the ones currently deployed across Europe.

Most of Russia's missile systems are capable of carrying either conventional or nuclear warheads. Russia's deputy foreign minister, Sergei Ryabkov, said last week that the Kremlin did not rule out new deployments of nuclear missiles in re-

sponse to the U.S. move.

Ryabkov added that defending Kaliningrad, Russia's heavily militarized exclave wedged between NATO members Poland and Lithuania, was of particular concern.

Putin has for years cast U.S. deployment of missile infrastructure in Europe as an aggressive move aimed at hamstringing Moscow's capabilities.

The news about the planned stationing of new weapons in Germany came at a NATO summit in Washington earlier this month. At the same event, allies announced that a new U.S. base in Poland, Ukraine's western neighbor, is ready to enter operation and will be capable of intercepting ballistic missiles.

# F-16s head to Ukraine, may not give edge

*The Washington Post*

KYIV, Ukraine— Long-awaited F-16 fighter jets are set to be flying in Ukraine within weeks, but Ukrainian and Western officials now caution that the aircraft, once championed by Kyiv as a game changer, are unlikely to make an immediate impact on the battlefield, where Russia is slowly advancing.

There are simply too few of the planes and too many Russian air defenses that can shoot them down. That means the first F-16s will probably serve to boost Ukraine's air defenses — to shoot down aerial targets such as missiles, drones and aircraft — rather than strike Russia's invading ground forces and other military assets near the front.

Officials have said that the planes, at least initially, are unlikely to fly too close to the front-line fighting, meaning it is unclear they will even be able to deter attacking enemy aircraft from crossing into Ukraine from Russian airspace.

Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway have pledged to provide Ukraine with 80 F-16s, but most of those won't arrive for years. The United States, which approved the

transfer of planes to Ukraine by NATO allies last summer after long blocking Kyiv's request, has not provided or pledged any aircraft.

Officials declined to say exactly how many jets Kyiv will receive this year, but it won't be more than one squadron — about 20 jets — and just six pilots were projected to complete training by this summer, because the program has limited spots and has been marred by delays.

The expected limited role of the U.S.-made planes highlights a deepening fault line between Kyiv and its Western supporters. U.S. officials had long said that the F-16s were unlikely to give Ukraine a decisive advantage because of Russia's robust air defenses. Ukrainian officials, however, respond with a familiar refrain: With F-16s, as with other materiel, the West has supplied too little, too late.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said Ukraine needs more than 100 F-16s to combat Russia's huge air force and has called the quantity of jets Ukraine is receiving "insufficient."

"The decision on the F-16 is strategic," he said. "The number is not yet strategic."

Some analysts are even more skeptical than Zelenskyy. Becca Wasser, an analyst at the Center for a New American Security, said the F-16s might be most potent as a psychological and morale boost for Ukrainians and a specter for Russian conscripts — in part because battlefield conditions have changed since last year when the decision to send the planes was announced.

"We've seen this pretty routine pattern when it comes to Western military equipment for Ukraine," she said. "There's an immediate need for them. Often by the time they are delivered that immediate operational need is null and void based on the rate of battlefield adaptation."

But they may also fill urgent needs, Wasser said, because of their dual role of shooting down enemy aircraft and hitting ground targets.

So far, Western nations donating the jets to Ukraine have not disclosed any restrictions on how they can be used. In other cases, Ukraine is limited in using Western weapons to strike targets in Russia. Officials have said Washington has confined Kyiv to firing less than about 62 miles, inside the border.

The question of restrictions might be moot because F-16s initially are expected to fly a cautious distance from the front, officials said.

A Ukrainian defense official, who, like others in this story, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive security matter, said "dozens" of pilots were tapped for F-16 training. But limited instructors and training facilities have forced Ukraine to send one group of pilots and engineering staff at a time, the official said.

Four months of English lessons in Britain to learn key terminology precede working with the aircraft, making it a year-long process even for experienced pilots.

Ukraine also cannot afford to part with too many experienced pilots for such a long stint because they are needed for combat duty, the defense official said.

"The main restriction ... is the amount of planes and time of training," a second Ukrainian official said. "If Russia has 300 [fighters] and you have much less, you can't operate properly."

"We will not use it too close to the Russians" due to the threat of air defenses, the official said.

## Russian push reportedly clears 2 eastern villages

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces have overrun two front-line villages, a Ukrainian army sergeant said Monday, after relentless assaults that are part of a Kremlin summer push to overwhelm battlefield defenses in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region.

"They pressed non-stop" to capture the villages of Vovche and Prohres, the chief sergeant of Ukraine's 47th Sepa-

rate Mechanized Brigade told Radio Svaboda. "They sent in a large number of troops, which had not previously been used." His name was not given for security reasons.

The two villages lie about 20 miles northwest of Avdiivka, a Donetsk city that the Russian army seized in February after a long battle. That victory was the Kremlin's last major triumph in the war that is now in its third year.

Russia's onslaught, fueled by its heavy advantage in soldiers and weaponry, has repeatedly forced the Ukrainians to pull back from defensive positions to avoid being captured or killed.

Oleksandr Shyrshyn, the 47th brigade's commander, confirmed to local media that the villages had been taken. He blamed poor training of troops, low abilities of officers, motivation and inade-

quate weapons for the setbacks.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy late Sunday described the situation in the Donetsk region as "extremely challenging."

Russia's strategy of attritional warfare, with powerful glide bombs smashing Ukrainian defenses before infantry move in, has brought incremental gains for the Kremlin as it seeks a big breakthrough.

# Nations discuss US troops' behavior in Japan

By BRIAN McELHINEY  
AND KEISHI KOJA

*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — U.S. Forces Japan is still working out details for a forum and joint patrols between U.S. military and Okinawan police announced last week to address anger over recent indictments of two service members for alleged sex crimes.

Over the weekend, the topic edged into a broader, high-level discussion between the two allies of tighter bonds and increased military capability to counter an assertive and sometimes coercive China.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with their Japanese counterparts — Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and Defense Minister Minoru Kihara — at the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee, or 2+2, meeting Sunday.

At a press conference following the meeting, the four welcomed measures taken by the U.S. military to deter misconduct by U.S. service members on Okinawa.

The measures, so far, include increased gate sobriety checks on weekends at Marine Corps bases throughout Japan and courtesy patrols in Okinawa's top nightlife spots.

USFJ is "in close consultation" with the Japanese government to create a "framework for the forum and joint patrols," according to an email Monday from USFJ spokeswoman Lt. Col. Mindy Yu.

The "forum of cooperation" with the Japanese and Okinawan governments and the joint patrols were announced by USFJ commander Lt. Gen. Ricky Rupp on July 22.

"This effort is complex and may take some time to jointly coordinate," the email said.

Yu said no decisions have been

made about anticipated changes to liberty rules for U.S. troops in Japan. Rupp, U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel and III Marine Expeditionary Force commander Lt. Gen. Roger Turner have called for consistent liberty policies for all services.

"Lt. Gen. Rupp's meetings with leadership in Okinawa last week provided valuable feedback for conduct policy discussions," Yu wrote.

Austin on Sunday said the U.S. "has put measures in place to ensure that these kinds of things don't happen again in the future," according to a press conference transcript posted on the State Department website.

Kihara and Kamikawa asked in the meeting that the U.S. "steadily implement the measures," they said at the press conference.

Senior Airman Brennon R.E. Washington pleaded not guilty July 12 in Naha District Court to

charges of kidnapping and sexually assaulting a minor in December. Marine Lance Cpl. Jamel Clayton was charged in May with attempting to sexually assault a woman in Yomitan village.

The indictments led Okinawa prefecture to deliver formal complaints to the U.S. Embassy and the Japanese government calling for changes to the status of forces agreement for U.S. troops on the island.

The director of the Okinawa Prefectural Police Criminal Affairs Division, Hitoshi Asato, said he "was not aware" of the joint patrol proposal before Rupp's statement. Asato, speaking Thursday at a special committee meeting of the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly, also expressed concern about U.S. military police exercising authority beyond their gates.

Joint patrols were last held on Okinawa in 1974, he said.

## Navy: Trash on Outer Banks shore from one of its ships

*The (Norfolk, Va.) Virginian-Pilot*

HATTERAS ISLAND, N.C. — A Navy investigation found that an estimated 1,250 pounds of trash that washed up on Outer Banks beaches in spring 2023 came from one of its ships.

"The waste that washed ashore was confirmed to have been from USS George H.W. Bush," according to Ted Brown, co-director of media operations/installations and environmental public affairs officer. "Appropriate action was taken as a result of the investigation and Sailors (sic) from the ship participated in cleanup efforts."

Previously, in May 2017, "processed plastic disks" from USS Whidbey Island washed ashore on the Outer Banks, Brown said in an email. The sailors found responsible following that investigation similarly "were held accountable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice."

The 2017 event totaled approxi-

mately 860 pounds of garbage. About 43 disks were recovered, each with an average weight of 20 pounds, according to Brown.

Cape Hatteras National Seashore reported last year that beginning on April 27, its staff and the Town of Nags Head observed "plastic, metal, paper and textile fabric debris washing up in low densities along approximately 25 miles of beaches, from Nags Head to the villages of Rodanthe, Waves and Salvo," according to an April 30, 2023, National Park Service news release.

The park service reported the incident to the U.S. Coast Guard's Sector North Carolina. Staff from Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, the Coast Guard, the Navy and the Town of Nags Head had been removing debris for three days at the time of the release and would continue to do so over the coming days, it said.

## US, South Korea urge North to end trash balloon flights

By DAVID CHOI

*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and South Korean Defense Minister Shin Won-sik on Sunday urged North Korea to immediately stop sending balloons carrying trash across its southern border.

The two also agreed to work closer with their Japanese counterpart to curb the communist regime's provocations.

During a meeting with Austin in Tokyo on Sunday, Shin called North Korea's practice of sending balloons to the South a "clear violation" of the Korean armistice agreement, according to a news release from the Ministry of National Defense that day.

"The two leaders strongly urged North Korea to immediately cease these provocative acts," a separate Defense Department news release said Sunday.

The 1953 armistice between the U.N. Command, North Korea and China established air and maritime borders and was meant to cease hostilities from the three-year Korean War.

North Korea has floated thousands of balloons carrying household trash across its border since May and most recently sent roughly 500 balloons on Wednesday. At least two landed on the South Korean presidential compound and on the U.S. Army's Yongsan Garrison in Seoul.

Pyeongyang claims its balloons are being sent in retaliation against South Korean activists who send balloons carrying humanitarian aid and pro-South Korean propaganda across the northern border.

Austin and Shin were joined by Japanese Defense Minister Kihara Minoru for the inaugural Trilateral Ministerial Meeting.



# Biden unveils proposed high court changes

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden has unveiled a long-awaited proposal for changes at the U.S. Supreme Court, calling on Congress to establish term limits and an enforceable ethics code for the court's nine justices. He's also pressing lawmakers to ratify a constitutional amendment limiting presidential immunity.

The White House on Monday detailed the contours of Biden's court proposal, one that appears to have little chance of being approved by a closely divided Congress with just 99 days to go before Election Day.

Still, Democrats hope it'll help focus voters as they consider their choices in a tight election. The likely Democratic nominee,

Vice President Kamala Harris, who has sought to frame her race against Republican ex-President Donald Trump as "a choice between freedom and chaos," said the court's fairness had been called into question following recent decisions.

The White House is looking to tap into the growing outrage among Democrats about the court, which has a 6-3 conservative majority, issuing opinions that overturned landmark decisions on abortion rights and federal regulatory powers that stood for decades.

Liberals have also expressed dismay over revelations about what they have said are questionable relationships and decisions by some members of the conservative wing of the court that sug-

gest their impartiality is compromised.

"I have great respect for our institutions and separation of powers," Biden argues in a Washington Post op-ed published Monday. "What is happening now is not normal, and it undermines the public's confidence in the court's decisions, including those impacting personal freedoms. We now stand in a breach."

Harris later issued a statement saying the American people must have confidence in a Supreme Court blighted by ethics scandals and decisions overturning long-standing precedent. She said the reforms being proposed "will help to restore confidence in the Court, strengthen our democracy and ensure no one is above the law."

The president planned to speak about his proposal later Monday during an address at the LBJ Presidential Library in Austin, Texas, to mark the 60th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act.

Biden is calling for doing away with lifetime appointments to the court. He says Congress should pass legislation to establish a system in which the sitting president would appoint a justice every two years to spend 18 years in service on the court.

He also wants Congress to pass legislation establishing a court code of ethics that would require justices to disclose gifts, refrain from public political activity and recuse themselves from cases in which they or their spouses have financial or other conflicts of interest.

## Calif. firefighters aiming to confront blaze head-on

Associated Press

FOREST RANCH, Calif. — Firefighters made progress and were aided by improving weather over the weekend in the battle against wildfires covering massive areas and leaving a trail of damage in the western United States, but further evacuations and resources have been necessary as thousands of personnel tackle the flames.

The so-called Park Fire, the largest wildfire in California this year, was one of more than 100 blazes burning in the United States on Sunday, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. Some were sparked by the weather, with climate change increasing the frequency of lightning strikes as the western U.S. endures blistering heat and bone-dry conditions.

The Park Fire had scorched an area greater than the city of Los Angeles as of Monday, darkening the sky with smoke and engaging thousands of firefighters. The blaze spanned more than

562 square miles of inland Northern California.

Winds and temperatures were expected to increase slightly amid a drop in humidity, officials said in an update early Monday.

Air quality alerts were issued for Monday in the northwestern U.S. and western Canada.

The Park Fire started Wednesday, when authorities said a man pushed a burning car into a gully in Chico and then fled. A man accused of setting the fire was arrested Thursday and is due in court Monday.

Firefighters increased containment to 12% on Saturday, aided by cooler temperatures and more humidity, officials said.

Although cooler-than-average temperatures are expected through the middle of this week, that doesn't mean existing fires will disappear, said Marc Chenard, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service's Weather Prediction Center in College Park, Md.

## Maduro declared winner of disputed vote in Venezuela

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — Nicolás Maduro was formally declared the winner of Venezuela's disputed presidential election Monday, just a day after after the country's political opposition and the entrenched incumbent both claimed victory in the contest.

The National Electoral Council declared Maduro's victory, handing him a third six-year term. The ministers of defense, communications, technology and the head of the National Assembly were among those in attendance who applauded.

"I slept like a newborn baby because it was a historic event," Maduro said in the nationally televised ceremony.

The election was to decide who will take control of an economy recovering from collapse and a population desperate for change. Officials delayed the release of detailed vote tallies from Sunday's election after proclaiming Maduro

the winner with 51% of the vote, compared with 44% for retired diplomat Edmundo González. The competing claims set up a high-stakes standoff.

"Venezuelans and the entire world know what happened," González said. The opposition vowed it would defend its votes, but González and his allies asked supporters to remain calm and called on the government to avoid stoking conflict.

Maduro accused unidentified foreign enemies of trying to hack the voting system. He provided no evidence but promised "justice" for those who try to stir violence in Venezuela.

Several foreign governments, including the United States and the European Union, held off recognizing the election results.

The official results came as a shock to many who had celebrated, online and outside a few voting centers, what they believed was a landslide victory for González.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

**Police: Woman fatally stabs wife with samurai sword**

**CA** LOS ANGELES — A Los Angeles-area woman has been taken into custody after police said she fatally stabbed her wife with a samurai sword, which she also allegedly used to attack her mother-in-law.

Weichien Huang, 44, has been booked for the murder of Chen Chen Fei, 47, both of San Dimas, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department said in a news release.

An investigation found that Huang and Fei were arguing inside their home when the altercation turned deadly.

The mother-in-law — who they did not name — was ultimately “able to gain control of the sword and fled the residence looking for help.” She is in stable condition at a nearby hospital.

**Dog missing since 2015 found alive 9 years later**

**NV** LAS VEGAS — Judith Monarrez crumpled onto her kitchen floor and wept when the news arrived in an email: Gizmo, her pet dog missing for nine years, had been found alive.

Monarrez was 28 and living with her parents in 2015 when Gizmo, then 2 years old, slipped past a faulty gate in the backyard of their home in Las Vegas.

Monarrez was told that a woman had found the now 11-year-old dog and dropped him off at the vet, where they scanned his microchip, triggering the email notification that sent Monarrez to her knees, crying.

Within hours of receiving that

email on July 17, Gizmo was back in his owner's arms. Monarrez called it “a miracle.”

“Hindsight is 20/20,” she said. “I'm so glad I registered his microchip.”

Monarrez said Thursday that Gizmo's first week back at home has brought mixed emotions.

The 8-pound Chihuahua had grown afraid of shadows, heights and birds, and Gizmo now walked with a limp. Monarrez said both of the dog's eyes were also severely infected, and some of his teeth were missing.

“Even though he looked so different, when I looked in his eyes I knew immediately it was Gizmo,” Monarrez said.

**Kevin Spacey's condo sold after foreclosure**

**MD** BALTIMORE — Kevin Spacey's \$5.6 million waterfront condominium in Baltimore has been sold at auction amid the disgraced actor's financial struggles following a slew of sexual misconduct allegations.

Spacey said in an emotional interview with British broadcast host Piers Morgan he was millions of dollars in debt, largely because of unpaid legal bills, and facing foreclosure on the Baltimore property.

Spacey moved to the Baltimore area when he started shooting the hugely popular political thriller “House of Cards” there in 2012.

His luxury condo on Baltimore's Inner Harbor sold at auction for \$3.24 million, according to the auctioneer's website.

It sits on a floating pier and boasts six bedrooms, seven full baths, an elevator, sauna, home theater, rooftop terrace, multi-

ple verandas and a four-car garage.

**Diamond dealer charged in scam to swap in fakes**

**NY** NEW YORK — A Manhattan diamond dealer with a history of gemstone fraud was indicted in what officials describe as a scheme to swindle his fellow merchants out of nearly half a million dollars by replacing their real diamonds with lab grown imitations.

Prosecutors said Manashe Sezanayev invited reputable dealers to his store in New York's diamond district under the guise of purchasing true diamonds from them. But while inspecting their product, he allegedly pocketed three diamonds worth \$460,000, covertly swapping them with duplicates cut and inscribed to look like originals.

Sezanayev, 41, pleaded not guilty to charges of grand larceny, a scheme to defraud and criminal possession of a forged instrument.

**Improprieties found in candidate's finances**

**DE** DOVER — A forensic review commissioned by the state Department of Elections has uncovered significant improprieties in the campaign finances of Delaware's lieutenant governor, who is seeking the Democratic nomination for governor.

The elections department hired Pennsylvania-based Forensic Litigation Consultants in January amid widespread scrutiny of Bethany Hall-Long's campaign finances. Jeffrey

Lampinski, a certified fraud examiner, found among other things that Hall-Long and her husband had received payments totaling \$33,000 more than what she purportedly loaned to her campaign.

Lampinski, a retired FBI senior executive, also found that Hall-Long's husband and former campaign treasurer, Dana Long, wrote four campaign checks to himself but falsely reported that they had been written to someone else. Similarly, Long wrote a check to former campaign fundraiser Jennifer Mueller but reported that it had been issued to someone else, he said.

**Workers link US, Canada sides of new major bridge**

**MI** DETROIT — Workers have linked the U.S. and Canadian sides of the new Gordie Howe International Bridge spanning the Detroit River, a major step in bringing the monumental project to completion.

The connection between southwest Detroit and northwest Windsor was completed on Wednesday, the Detroit News reported. The work took six years, with about 2,000 workers on site every day. The bridge still isn't finished, though. Work is expected to continue until the fall of 2025.

Named for Canadian hockey player Gordie Howe, who spent 25 seasons with the Detroit Red Wings, the bridge will provide another link between one of the busiest points on the U.S.-Canadian border. About a third of all trade between the U.S. and Canada occurs between Detroit and Windsor.

— From wire reports

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# US women go 1-2 in 100-meter butterfly

Associated Press

NANTERRE, France — Torri Huske touched the wall and turned to teammate Gretchen Walsh knowing they each had won an Olympic medal. Both Americans quickly spun their heads around to see the scoreboard to find out who had captured gold.

Huske had her elusive Olympic title, by just 0.04 seconds over Walsh in the women's 100-meter butterfly on Sunday night. She edged the world-record holder swimming to her right, coming from behind in a fantastic finish.

Walsh led at the 50-meter mark and was under her world-record pace, with Huske in third.

Huske caught Walsh, something she couldn't do at the

Olympic trials last month, touching the wall in 55.59 seconds, just ahead of Walsh's 55.63.

"You never really know for sure and I first saw the light by the block and seeing that it was just very surreal, I didn't even know how to process it," Huske said. "It's just very overwhelming when you've been dreaming of this moment for so long."

Huske lifted her goggles from her eyes and covered her mouth with her left hand as Walsh reached over the lane line with a congratulatory pat on the cap.

Zhang Yufei won bronze, her second of the Games after her Chinese team finished third in the 4x100-meter freestyle relay Saturday. Zhang was among the 23 swimmers from China who tested positive for a banned

heart medication ahead of the Tokyo Games three years ago but were allowed to compete.

This has been a long time coming for Huske, a Stanford swimmer who has been working on improving her final 50 meters following some disappointing results. She just missed a medal at the Tokyo Olympics, placing fourth with a 55.73.

It has been a great start for Huske in Paris. She earned a silver in the 4x100-meter freestyle relay Saturday. On Sunday, her final followed French star Léon Marchand's commanding 400 individual medley victory, which ignited the home crowd at La Defense Arena.

"Honestly I don't remember my race that much. My first 50 felt really good and then I've been working on my second 50 a

lot, especially after last year," Huske said.

In the medal ceremony, Huske pulled Walsh from the second step and the two 21-year-olds stood together atop the podium as the national anthem played. They then grabbed an American flag and draped it around themselves for a victory lap around the pool.

A night earlier in the semifinals, Walsh set an Olympic record of 55.38, just shy of her 55.18 world record on June 14.

"It was an amazing race. I was definitely nervous before, I feel like there was a lot of pressure on me just having gotten the world record and the Olympic record last night, and I just wanted to try to execute the race as best as I could," Walsh said.

## Army sergeant finishes just off podium in air rifle

BY MATT WAGNER

Stars and Stripes

CHATEAUROUX, France — Army Sgt. Sagen Maddalena needed time to process the women's 10-meter air rifle final Monday morning at the Chateauroux Shooting Centre.

Who could blame her? The 30-year-old shooter came agonizingly close to bringing home a piece of Olympic hardware — just missing the podium by finishing fourth.

Maddalena was the last one eliminated prior to the medal-winning rounds, falling just 1.4 points short of Switzerland's Audrey Gogniat — the eventual bronze medalist.

It's an event where competitors are so accurate that even something that could be considered a bull's-eye can come up just a bit short. A shot that hits dead center in the target would score a 10.9, followed incrementally by others farther away.

South Korea's Hyo-jin Ban eventually defeated China's Yuting Huang 251.8 (10.4 final

shot) to 251.8 (10.3) to win the gold. Both equaled the Olympic record set by Chinese shooter Qian Yang at the Tokyo Games in 2021.

"It was a lot of work to get here and just being dropped out (at the end) ..." Maddalena said after the event. "(I was) pretty nervous going into it, but then got my stuff together, did what I had to do to get my nerves down. I actually felt fairly calm once I stepped up on the line because I knew my job."

The finals' format added to the stress level.

Following two sets of five shots, each athlete had two more attempts. Then the one with the lowest points was eliminated.

That process was repeated over and over until one shooter was left standing.

Maddalena entered the elimination stage in fourth, but after her 12th shot, she was sitting in seventh place and on the chopping block.

The Groveland, Calif., native

then locked in. A 10.4 score on her next shot gave her some breathing space, and then she popped off a 10.8 on her 14th try to leapfrog into fourth. She overtook hometown favorite Oceanne Muller of France and Kazakhstan's Alexandra Le, who won a bronze medal Saturday in the team event.

Those two finished fifth and sixth, respectively.

Maddalena added a second consecutive 10.8 to put herself in medal contention. She had a chance heading into her final shot, trailing Gogniat by half a point. But a tally of 9.8 ended her tournament run.

The atmosphere was different than in qualifying.

Once quiet outside of the pops of air rifles, cheering from the crowd was not only allowed in the elimination round but encouraged. Maddalena received her share of noise following her two-shot stretch of 10.8.

"The crowd and spectators were great," Maddalena said. "I could definitely feel the excite-

ment in the air."

Maddalena still has one event left: the women's 50-meter three-position rifle. That begins Thursday with the qualification round at noon Central European Time.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks alumna placed fifth in the specialty during the Tokyo Games.

Maddalena said she hopes her fourth-place performance at 10 meters can be a springboard to bigger things.

"Yeah, smallbore should be pretty good," Maddalena said. "I can't speculate on it, but I'm prepped."

In another shooting event Monday, Army Staff Sgt. Will Hinton began the men's trap qualification rounds. After three rounds, the 28-year-old member of the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit was 29th out of 30 competitors.

Hinton will complete two rounds Tuesday morning. The top six in the event advance to the finals later in the day.



# US women's soccer cruises past Germany

Associated Press

MARSEILLE, France — Coach Emma Hayes tempered expectations as the United States cruised to a 4-1 win over Germany on Sunday night for a spot in the quarterfinals at the Paris Olympics.

Sophia Smith scored two goals for the Americans, who have won their opening two matches in France. Mallory Swanson and Lynn Williams also scored against Germany.

"We haven't done anything, let's be frank," Hayes said. "We've got three points against a really good German team. That's all it is, nothing more."

The Americans are playing their first major tournament under Hayes, who took over the U.S. team in late May.

Hayes is tasked with leading the Americans as they seek to distance themselves from the disappointment of last summer's Women's World Cup, when they crashed out in the round of 16.

The U.S. is the winningest team in the Olympics, with four gold medals. The Americans won the bronze medal at the Tokyo Games under former coach Vlatko Andonovski, who resigned following the World Cup.

Smith started for the U.S. after leaving the opener in the first half with what appeared to be an ankle injury.

Ten minutes into the match, Smith struck a cross from Trinity Rodman that sailed past German goalkeeper Katrin-Ann Berger.

Giulia Gwinn equalized in the 22nd minute with a low, bouncing shot from well outside the penalty area that eluded diving U.S. goalkeeper Alyssa Naeher.

Swanson put the U.S. back in front in the 26th. Berger punched out an attempt from distance by Smith, but Swanson picked up the rebound for a goal. It was Swanson's third goal of the Olympics.

Swanson is the second player to score three goals in the group at an Olympics, joining Abby Wambach in 2012.

Smith scored her second in the 44th minute on a high-arcing shot that hit the far post and caromed into the goal.

"Anytime I'm in a position to get a touch, shift and shoot. I'm going to take it," Smith said.

Williams, a substitute, added the final goal in the 89th minute and fans in Marseille chanted "USA! USA!" as time ran down.

U.S. defender Tierna Davidson left the match with an injury and was replaced by Emily Sonnett.

Alexandra Popp left in the 76th minute with what appeared to be a right leg injury. It was a blow to Germany, which was already playing without midfielder Lena Oberdorf (knee).

The U.S. plays Australia in Marseille on Wednesday to conclude group play. Germany, which defeated Australia in its Olympic opener 3-0, plays Zambia in Saint-Etienne.

**Canada 2, France 1:** Vanessa

Gilles scored in the 12th minute of stoppage time against France to keep Canada's hopes of advancing alive.

Canada looked to be heading out of the tournament before its final Group A match when the game was tied 1-1 in Saint-Etienne.

A six-point deduction for the drone-spying scandal meant only a win would be enough to give the defending Olympic champion any chance of advancing.

Gilles converted via the post from close range to seal the comeback win after Jordyn Huitema's shot was saved.

Marie-Antoinette Katoto had put France ahead in the 42nd and Jessie Fleming evened the match in the 58th to give the Canadians hope.

The win still leaves Canada on zero points despite back-to-back wins because of the sanctions by FIFA. Canada was looking into an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport over the ruling.

## Batten fined after silver in best finish by US mountain biker

Associated Press

ELANCOURT, France — Haley Batten was fined by the Olympic mountain bike judges for breaking a rule on the final lap of her race Sunday, although she will no doubt gladly pay the modest penalty after her silver medal marked the best finish ever by an American rider.

Batten was jockeying for second place with Sweden's Jenny Rissveds, well behind eventual champion Pauline Ferrand-Prevot, when she went through a lane dedicated for taking on food and drink or stopping for mechanical problems. But after the judges reviewed the footage, they decided Batten had done neither and broke one of the rules of the race.

She was fined about \$565 for "failure to respect the instructions of the race organization or commissaires," though the judges apparently decided that the infraction was not serious enough to warrant a disqualification.

It hardly put a damper on a banner day for Batten, who finished ninth three years ago at the Tokyo Games.

"I knew before Tokyo that this was the race I was focusing on," she said. "I've known for a long time that I could be good here and Tokyo

was — I wanted to be on the podium there, but I wasn't quite ready to be honest. I prepared much better to be the best I've ever been. For me, preparation has been in the details, studying and building every single year."

The 25-year-old from Park City, Utah, has been at the forefront of a new wave of American mountain bike talent. That includes her 25-year-old teammate Savilia Blunk, who finished 12th on Sunday, and 26-year-old Christopher Blevins and 22-year-old Riley Amos, who was to compete in the men's race Monday.

The fact that Batten was in the mix at Elancourt Hill, where the Olympic mountain bike race took place just outside of Paris, was not a complete surprise. She proved she's among the world's elite when she won this year's World Cup race in Araxá, Brazil.

But Batten also had to overcome a concussion that forced her to miss last year's world championships in Scotland, and more recently, a minor Achilles injury during the World Cup short-track event at Crans-Montana in the Swiss Alps.

Batten also had to overcome adversity in Sunday's race. She punctured a tire but was

fortunate to be near the U.S. team mechanics, who quickly changed it and got her back in the race. Batten had slipped back to sixth but was able to rally, then swapped positions with Rissveds on the final lap before pulling away and capturing the silver medal.

Her brother, Nash Batten, said he was in awe watching his sister achieve her Olympic dream.

"I've been lucky enough to have her as my role model for my entire life," he said Sunday. "Now she gets to be the role model for millions more. It's a real honor."

The only other medals won by the Americans had been bronze by Susan DeMattei in 1996 and Georgia Gould in 2012.

"Being able to perform on one day is really challenging, and everybody at the Olympics is the best in the world," said Batten, who is coached in part by Kristin Armstrong, the three-time Olympic time trial champion.

"Everybody's strong, everybody's fit. Everybody's well-prepared and can ride at their best. So for me to mentally be able to clear my mind and be ready and race at my best, regardless of challenges before the race and during the race, it's amazing."

# Kwan, Noel power Guardians over Phillies

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Steven Kwan hit a go-ahead solo homer in the seventh inning after Jhonkensy Noel tied the score with a three-run shot in the fourth, and the Cleveland Guardians rallied for a 4-3 win over the Philadelphia Phillies on Sunday.

Kwan's 11th homer of the season came off lefty reliever José Alvarado (1-5) and helped Cleveland win two of three at Philadelphia. The Guardians won their 63rd game, tops in the American League, and trail only the Phillies (65) for most in the majors.

"Home runs help," Guardians manager Stephen Vogt said. "It's not part of who we are, necessarily. But we have been able to hit them in big moments."

Kyle Schwarber homered twice for the Phillies off Cleveland rookie Joey Cantillo, a leadoff shot and a two-run homer in the fourth for a 3-0 lead.

Tim Herrin (4-0) got one out in the sixth. Emmanuel Clase retired Schwarber on a grounder in a scoreless ninth for his 33rd save. Cleveland's six relievers tossed one-hit shutout ball and struck out six in the final 5½ innings.

The Phillies are in a summer funk after they raced to the best start in franchise history. They lost for the sixth time in nine games since the All-Star break and the eighth time in the past 12 games overall.

"We've got to straighten some things out, for sure," Phillies manager Rob Thomson said. "We've got to get back to winning series. Get back to winning the first game of the series, which is critical."

**Rays 2, Reds 1:** Tampa Bay took advantage of visiting Cincinnati's bullpen to score twice in the eighth inning for a comeback win.

With the bases loaded, Rays reliever Fernando Cruz struck out Amed Rosario, but catcher Austin Wynns could not handle the pitch and pinch runner Jose

Caballero scored to tie the game. Lucas Sims came in to replace Cruz and walked Richie Palacios to score Brandon Lowe and give the Rays the 2-1 lead.

**Twins 5, Tigers 0:** Bailey Ober allowed one hit in eight scoreless innings, and visiting Minnesota beat Detroit to win the weekend and season series.

Ober (10-5) allowed a single to Matt Vierling to lead off the fourth and walked two batters while striking out a career-high 11. He is 3-0 with a 0.69 ERA in four starts against the Tigers this season.

**Cardinals 4, Nationals 3:** Paul Goldschmidt hit a game-ending homer in the ninth inning, and host St. Louis beat Washington to snap a three-game skid.

Leading off the ninth, Goldschmidt hit a 2-2 sinker from Dylan Floro (3-3) into the left-field stands for his 16th homer of the season and eighth career walk-off shot.

**Mariners 6, White Sox 3:** Cal Raleigh hit a two-run homer, Bryce Miller pitched 6⅓ innings and visiting Seattle completed a three-game sweep of Chicago to extend its losing streak to 14 games.

Miller (8-7) allowed three runs on seven hits with seven strikeouts and did not allow a walk. Austin Voth got two outs in the seventh, Yimi García pitched a scoreless eighth and Andrés Muñoz closed the game with a scoreless inning in steady rain for his 18th save in 21 chances.

**Blue Jays 7, Rangers 3:** Daulton Varsho homered in the first inning for the second straight game, José Berríos pitched seven sharp innings to snap a three-start winless streak and host Toronto beat Texas to complete a three-game sweep of the defending World Series champions.

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hit a solo home run, his fifth in nine games, and drove in two as the Blue Jays earned their second

sweep of the season.

**Braves 9, Mets 2:** Matt Olson homered in consecutive games for the first time this season, and visiting Atlanta overcame an injury to All-Star starter Reynaldo López in a victory against New York.

Austin Riley, Orlando Arcia and Ramón Laureano also went deep for the Braves, who salvaged a split after losing the first two games of the series. They hold the top NL wild card and moved 1½ games ahead of New York for second place in the NL East.

**Orioles 8, Padres 6:** Ryan Mountcastle hit a pair of two-run singles, Cedric Mullins made a terrific catch in center field and host Baltimore held off San Diego to snap its seven-game winning streak.

The Orioles scored six runs in the third, when their first six hitters reached base before Randy Vásquez (3-6) was pulled. Baltimore then nearly blew its six-run lead, as the Padres scored three runs in the fifth and Xander Bogaerts hit a two-run homer the following inning.

**Cubs 7, Royals 3:** Pete Crow-Armstrong, who came into the game hitting .183, was 3-for-4 with a run and the go-ahead RBI as visiting Chicago beat Kansas City.

Javier Assad (5-3) allowed three runs on five hits in six innings to earn the win.

**Dodgers 6, Astros 2:** Teoscar Hernández hit his 22nd home run, River Ryan struck out eight in his first major league win and visiting Los Angeles beat Houston.

Gavin Lux and James Outman also homered and Shohei Ohtani stole his career-high 27th base for the Dodgers, who came in with a 1-7 road record in July.

**Brewers 6, Marlins 2:** Rookie Xavier Edwards became the second Miami player ever to hit for the cycle, but the Marlins lost to host Milwaukee, which got a homer and a triple from

Jake Bauers.

Jackson Chourio homered and Brice Turang went 2 for 4 and made two straight run-saving catches for the Brewers.

**Pirates 6, Diamondbacks 5 (10):** Ji Hwan Bae scored the go-ahead run on a wild pitch in visiting Pittsburgh's four-run 10th inning, Joey Bart hit a tying RBI double in the ninth and the Pirates rallied to beat Arizona.

Ke'Bryan Hayes capped the 10th with a two-run bloop single to make it 6-2. The Diamondbacks nearly tied it again in their half, with Eugenio Suárez and Lourdes Gurriel Jr. each going deep, but ultimately fell short.

**Giants 5, Rockies 4:** Matt Chapman and Jorge Soler each had three hits, and host San Francisco finished off a four-game sweep of Colorado with a victory.

It was San Francisco's first four-game sweep since 2022. The Giants have beaten Colorado 12 straight times at home, tying a Rockies record for most consecutive losses at any opposing ballpark.

**Yankees 8, Red Sox 2:** Carlos Rodón pitched into the seventh inning, Gleyber Torres hit a two-run single in visiting New York's three-run first and it beat Boston to win a series for just the second time in its last 12 tries.

Jazz Chisholm Jr. batted fifth, going 1 for 5 with a single, and played center field in his Yankees debut after they acquired him from Miami for three minor leaguers Saturday.

**Angels 8, Athletics 6:** Taylor Ward hit a grand slam to help erase an early 6-0 deficit, and host Los Angeles beat Oakland to avoid a four-game sweep.

Ward's fourth-inning slam into the Oakland bullpen in left-center off Osvaldo Bido (2-2) was the fourth of his career and the fourth by an Angel this season. His previous grand slam was on May 4, 2022, also against Oakland.