

Hamas' top political leader killed in Iran

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Hamas' top political leader was killed Wednesday by a predawn airstrike in the Iranian capital, Iran and the militant group said, blaming Israel for a shock assassination that risked escalating into an all-out regional war. Iran's supreme leader vowed revenge against Israel.

Israel, which kept silent about the strike, had pledged to kill Ismail Haniyeh and other Hamas leaders over the group's Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel that sparked the war in Gaza. The strike came just after Haniyeh had attended the inauguration of Iran's new president in Tehran — and hours after Israel targeted a top commander in Iran's ally Hezbollah in the Lebanese capital, Beirut.

The assassination was potentially explosive amid the region's volatile, intertwined con-

licts because of its target, its timing and the decision to carry it out in Tehran. Most dangerous was the potential to push Iran and Israel into direct confrontation if Iran retaliates. The United States and other nations scrambled to prevent a wider, deadlier conflict.

In a statement on his official website, Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said revenge was "our duty" and that Israel had "prepared a harsh punishment for itself" by killing "a dear guest in our home."

Bitter regional rivals, Israel and Iran risked plunging into war earlier this year when Israel hit Iran's embassy in Damascus in April. Iran retaliated, and Israel countered in an unprecedented exchange of strikes on each other's soil, but international efforts succeeded in containing that cycle before it spun out of control.

Haniyeh's killing could also prompt Hamas to pull out of negotiations for a cease-fire and hostage release deal in the 10-month-old war in Gaza, which U.S. mediators had said were making progress.

And it could inflame already rising tensions between Israel and Hezbollah, which international diplomats were trying to contain after a weekend rocket attack that killed 12 young people in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights.

Israel carried out a rare strike Tuesday evening in the Lebanese capital that it said killed a top Hezbollah commander allegedly behind the rocket strike. Hezbollah, which denied any role in the Golan strike, said Wednesday that it was searching for the body of Fouad Shukur in the rubble of the building hit in a Beirut suburb. The strike killed three women and

two children, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry.

There was no immediate reaction from the White House to Haniyeh's death. A key question was whether Israel told the U.S., its top ally, ahead of time.

Asked about Haniyeh's killing, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, "This is something we were not aware of or involved in." Speaking to Channel News Asia, Blinken said he would not speculate about the impact on cease-fire efforts. "But I can tell you that the imperative of getting a cease-fire, the importance that that has for everyone, remains."

A top Hamas official, Khalil al-Hayya, told journalists in Iran that whoever replaces Haniyeh will "follow the same vision" regarding negotiations to end the war — and continue in the same policy of resistance against Israel.

\$7M negligence claim filed against Navy in sailor's death

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The father of a Navy sailor who died after falling into the Baltic Sea from a destroyer two years ago has filed a wrongful death claim for \$7 million against the service.

Lee Spearman of Huntingdon, Tenn., alleges medical personnel and officials aboard the USS Arleigh Burke knew Seaman Recruit David "Dee" Spearman had a history of dangerous fainting spells, but did not take adequate measures to protect him.

The 19-year-old sailor, who had been declared fit for duty, was working by himself when he fell into the dark waters of the sea around noon on Aug. 1, 2022.

With that medical history and in the absence of a clear diagnosis, Dee Spearman should not have been allowed to work alone on the ship deck, especially without a personal flotation device, Lee Spearman told Stars and Stripes on Sunday.

"It's so blatantly negligent that I can't go to sleep without my son having some type of justice," he said. "It's not right."

Spearman gave a copy of the claim, including an investigation report by U.S. 6th Fleet, to Stars and Stripes. He made it using a Standard Form 95, which is typically used to file for damages against the U.S. under the Federal Tort Claims Act.

On Tuesday, the Navy declined to say whether it had received Spearman's claim, which he sent to the Judge Advocate General on Friday. The service said only that it does not comment on individual claims.

A Naval Criminal Investigative Service report found that Dee Spearman had lost consciousness at least four times in the weeks before his death and had repeatedly sought help from Arleigh Burke's medical staff.

Investigators did not offer a conclusion about what caused the young sailor's death but seemed to suggest he may have fainted or slipped while sanding the ship's forward bulkhead, according to a copy of the

report obtained by Stars and Stripes through an information request.

No one saw Spearman fall and there wasn't any video, NCIS investigators found.

A Stars and Stripes investigation into Spearman's death found that while his fainting episodes were well-documented, little was done to keep him safe.

The findings also revealed failures in communication and decision-making and lapses in how the Navy reports and studies man-overboard events.

In his declaration, Lee Spearman points to findings in the 6th Fleet investigation that he has said support his assertion of negligence.

Report says US not ready for global war

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The United States would need to increase its defense spending to Cold War-era levels to challenge threats around the world as China, Russia, North Korea and Iran foster an alliance that could lead to global war, according to a congressional commission formed to examine the national defense strategy.

“Where this goes, it seems to me, is terrifying. That is, again, why we need to leverage all elements of national power to make sure we deter these countries from acting against us,” Jane Harman, chairwoman of the Commission on the National Defense Strategy, said Tuesday during a hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The commission recommended in a 132-page report released Monday that the U.S. overhaul its national defense strategy and \$900 billion defense budget to address recruiting failures, a “grossly inadequate” industrial base, and underfunded cyber and space domains. The commission was tasked by Congress with analyzing the 2022 defense strategy, which was written prior to Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine and the evolution of the strategic partnership between China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea.

“There is potential for near-term war and a potential that we might lose such a conflict,” Eric Edelman, vice chairman of the Commission on the National Defense Strategy, told senators.

The U.S. has failed to keep pace with China and Russia, according to the report. The global economic damage from a Chinese blockade of Taiwan has been estimated to cost \$5 tril-

lion. An all-out war, the report read, would be more costly.

“We are optimized to fight very short wars,” Edelman said.

The commission endorsed its 2018 recommendation to increase base defense spending by 3 to 5% annually above inflation. That has not been consistently achieved. In recent years, the U.S. has dedicated about 3% of its global gross domestic product, which is a measure of economic growth reflecting the total value of goods and services produced in a country.

A return to post-Cold War-era defense spending would mean upping the defense spending budget to about 5% of the U.S. global gross domestic product. During the Cold War, U.S. defense spending ranged between 4.9% and 16.9%.

The report described the U.S. military as being “at its breaking point,” stating a multi-theater war that could be on the horizon could overwhelm the active-duty force. If the U.S. were to face a “worst-case scenario” global conflict, it would require a national mobilization not seen since World War II.

“We haven’t thought about that in a long time. There are a lot of elements to it — including stockpiling strategic materials — but being able to rapidly bring people into the military, I just don’t think we’re prepared to do it,” Edelman said.

To prepare for a global war, the report pointed to a need for the government to work with the private technology sector to strengthen the industrial base and supply chains.

To address recruiting failures, the commission said it supports an urgent call to action for military service and civil service.

US military launches 1st strike in Iraq in months

The Washington Post

U.S. forces carried out an airstrike in Iraq on Tuesday night, targeting unspecified “combatants” attempting to launch a one-way attack drone, officials said.

The incident followed attacks on American positions in Iraq and Syria in recent days, officials said, ending what had been months of relative calm between U.S. forces and militias there that are supported by Iran.

U.S. officials said the airstrike happened in Musayib, a town south of Baghdad, but disclosed few other details.

A defense official said in a brief statement that “based on recent attacks in Iraq and Syria,” U.S. military officials assessed that the activity constituted a threat to American and coalition forces. Like some others, this official spoke on the condition of anonymity to dis-

cuss the operation.

“This action underscores the United States’ commitment to the safety and security of our personnel,” the statement said. “We maintain the inherent right to self-defense and will not hesitate to take appropriate action.”

A second defense official said the airstrike followed three attacks on U.S. forces in recent days. Last Thursday, two rockets targeted al Asad Air Base in Iraq and another struck on or near a U.S. outpost in Syria, the official said. The following day, two additional rockets targeted the facility in Syria, Mission Support Site Euphrates. No damage or injuries were reported in any of those incidents, the official said.

U.S. officials have long feared that Israel’s war in Gaza could spill over into other parts of the Middle East, where Iran enjoys considerable influence.

2 Russian bombers seen flying over Sea of Japan

BY YOO KYONG CHANG,
HANA KUSUMOTO
AND JOSEPH DITZLER

Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — Moscow sent a pair of missile-armed, long-range bombers on a 10-hour training flight this week over waters between Japan and South Korea, according to the Russian Ministry of Defense.

The Tu-95MS Bear-H strategic bombers flew over international waters on Tuesday, according to a ministry statement that day. The report referred to the bomber mission as a “planned flight.”

South Korean and Japanese fighters intercepted the bom-

bers en route, according to military sources in each country.

Sukhoi Su-35S and Su-30SM fighters escorted the bombers, according to state-run Russian news agency Tass.

The bombers “at some stages of the route” were escorted by “foreign fighters,” according to the Defense Ministry.

South Korean jets “made sorties and the military took necessary measures” in response to the bomber presence, according to a statement Tuesday from the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The Japan Air Self-Defense Force also scrambled fighters to intercept, according to a news release Tuesday from the Japan Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Lake wins GOP primary for Senate in Ariz.

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Kari Lake won the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate in Arizona on Tuesday, setting up a fierce battle against Democratic U.S. Rep. Ruben Gallego for a seat that could be crucial to deciding Senate control.

In Maricopa County, which includes metro Phoenix and 60% of Arizona's voters, Republicans also were choosing between a slate of incumbents who have stood up to former President Donald Trump's lies about the 2020 election and challengers who claim it was stolen.

The primary will give insights about where the narrow-

ly divided state is headed going into the final sprint of the 2024 election, when Arizona is central to the fight for control of the White House and Congress.

Gallego ran unopposed in the Democratic primary for Senate.

Accepting victory Tuesday night, Lake called Trump a "hero" and urged his supporters to back her as well.

"He can't do this alone," Lake said. "He needs backup in Washington, D.C. And I'm going to be his backup."

The once-crowded field of Republicans looking at the Senate race thinned out when Lake, who built a national profile in Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement in an unsuc-

cessful 2022 bid for Arizona governor, made clear she planned to run for the seat.

Lake defeated Pinal County Sheriff Mark Lamb, who had contended he is more electable and the best candidate to secure the border. But he struggled to raise the money needed to make his case to voters. Through the end of June, Lake had raised \$10.3 million compared with Lamb's \$2 million.

Lake faces Gallego in the race to replace Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, who was elected as a Democrat in 2018 but left the party to become an independent after her standing among the Democratic base cratered. Sinema considered running as an indepen-

dent but opted against it.

Lake entered politics after leaving the news anchor desk at the Phoenix Fox affiliate and quickly became a rising star on the right. Grassroots Republicans were drawn to her biting critiques of her former colleagues in the news media, her tough talk on border security and her unwavering support for Trump, who for a time considered her for his running mate.

"Go vote," Trump urged supporters in a telephone rally with Lake on Monday evening. "She's fantastic. She will not let us down. Kari Lake, I just think she's going to be as good as you can get. There's nobody going to be better."

Fire crews hope to maintain progress against Calif. blaze

Associated Press

FOREST RANCH, Calif. — Fire crews worked Tuesday to hold on to the progress made against the largest blaze in California this year ahead of warming temperatures forecast for later this week.

Authorities said containment was 14% and lifted evacuation orders in some communities of Butte County, where the Park Fire started last week before spreading to a neighboring county and scorching an area bigger than Los Angeles.

The massive fire continues to burn through rugged, inaccessible terrain with dense vegetation, threatening to spread to two other counties.

"That's going to be a continued challenge for us moving forward over the next couple of days," said Mark Brunton, an operations section chief with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Cooler weather has helped firefighters stop the blaze's path near some communities like Forest Ranch, where some people began returning to unscathed homes

Tuesday.

Christopher and Anita Angeloni have lived in the community of 1,600 for 23 years and have had to evacuate several times due to wildfires, including the 2018 Camp Fire that killed 85 people and decimated the town of Paradise, about 8 miles south.

Christopher Angeloni said he constantly worked on creating defensible space around his home and was happy to return home nearly a week after evacuating to see his hard work paid off.

"We were prepared to possibly lose everything," he said.

Anita Angeloni said it has been a stressful week.

"We have not been sleeping enough, very tense, praying all the time, teary eyes," she said. "But we're here. We'll see for how long."

The Park Fire, now the fifth largest in the state's recorded history, was one of more than 100 large active wildfires burning in the U.S. on Tuesday. It has scorched nearly 600 square miles, according to CAL Fire. For comparison, the city of Los Angeles covers about 470 square miles.

Demands grow for Maduro to detail Venezuela votes

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — Pressure kept building against Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on Wednesday, when his close ally Colombian President Gustavo Petro joined other foreign leaders in urging him to release detailed vote counts from the recent presidential election after electoral authorities declared him the winner.

Petro's comments come as the National Electoral Council, which is loyal to the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela, has yet to release any printed results from polling centers as it did in past elections. A day earlier, another of Maduro's allies, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, along with U.S. President Joe Biden called for the "immediate release of full, transparent, and detailed voting data at the polling station level."

The rebukes follow the stunning announcement Monday of Maduro's main challenger, Edmundo González, and opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, that they had secured more than

two-thirds of the tally sheets that each electronic voting machine printed after polls closed on Sunday. They said the release of the data on those tallies would prove Maduro lost the election.

Machado said the tallies show González received roughly 6.2 million votes compared with 2.7 million for Maduro. That is widely different from the electoral council's report that Maduro received 5.1 million votes, against 4.4 million for González.

"The serious doubts that have arisen around the Venezuelan electoral process can lead its people to a deep violent polarization with serious consequences of permanent division," Petro said Wednesday in a post on social media site X.

Venezuela has the world's largest proven crude reserves and once boasted Latin America's most advanced economy, but it entered into a free fall after Maduro took the helm in 2013. Plummeting oil prices, widespread shortages and hyperinflation that soared past 130,000% led to social unrest and mass emigration.

Boeing names new CEO amid \$1.4B loss in second quarter

Associated Press

Boeing named a longtime aerospace industry veteran on Wednesday as its next chief executive, who will take over a company that has been rocked by legal, regulatory and production problems.

Robert “Kelly” Ortberg, a former CEO at aerospace supplier Rockwell Collins, will succeed David Calhoun, 67, as CEO and president effective Aug. 8, the company said. Calhoun announced in March that he would retire at the end of the year.

Boeing named its new CEO as it reported a loss of more than \$1.4 billion on falling revenue during the second quarter. The loss was wider and revenue lower than Wall Street expected, as both Boeing’s commercial-airplanes business and defense unit lost money.

The disappointing results come at a tumultuous time for Boeing. The company agreed to plead guilty this month to a federal fraud charge in connection with

its 737 Max jetliner and two crashes that killed 346 people. The Federal Aviation Administration increased its oversight of the company after the blowout of a panel on an Alaska Airlines jet raised manufacturing quality concerns.

Boeing Chairman Steven Mollenkopf said Ortberg was chosen after a “thorough and extensive search process” and “has the right skills and experience to lead Boeing in its next chapter.” Ortberg has earned a reputation for running complex engineering and manufacturing companies, Mollenkopf said.

The company waived the mandatory retirement age of 65 for Ortberg, a spokesperson said. Boeing did the same for Calhoun days after he turned 64 in 2021.

Ortberg emerged as a leading candidate only recently. Others who were reportedly considered for the job included Patrick Shanahan, a former Boeing executive and now CEO of its most impor-

tant supplier, Spirit AeroSystems, and another longtime Boeing executive, Stephanie Pope, who recently took over the commercial airplanes division.

Like Calhoun, who took over as CEO in the wake of the two Max crashes, Ortberg will be inheriting the leadership of a company facing ongoing crises and criticism from both outside and internally. It is pushing back against whistleblower allegations of manufacturing shortcuts that crimp on safety.

The company, based in Arlington, Va., also is dealing with supply-chain problems that are hindering production, which it hopes to fix in part by reacquiring Spirit AeroSystems, a key contractor.

It is still trying to persuade regulators to approve two new models of the Max and a bigger version of its two-aisle 777 jetliner. And it faces a multibillion-dollar decision on when to design a new single-aisle plane to replace the Max.

Court rules that Texas barrier can stay for now

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — A floating barrier in the Rio Grande meant to discourage migrants from trying to cross from Mexico into Texas can stay for now, a full federal appeals court ruled Tuesday.

The decision by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned a previous decision by a panel of the court. The ruling is the latest development in a standoff between Texas and President Joe Biden’s administration over immigration on the state’s 1,200-mile border with Mexico.

In December, a divided panel of the 5th Circuit had sided with a federal district judge in Texas who said the buoys must be moved. The entire appeals court on Tuesday said the court abused its discretion in granting the preliminary injunction.

The broader lawsuit in district court is set for a trial beginning on Aug. 6, where the Biden administration accuses Texas of violating the federal Rivers and Harbor Act. Vanita Gupta, associate attorney general, said Texas “flouted federal law” and risks damaging U.S. foreign policy.

The series of linked, concrete-anchored buoys stretches roughly the length of three soccer fields in one of the busiest hotspots for illegal border crossings.

The state installed it along the international border with Mexico between the Texas border city of Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras, Coahuila.

The barrier is one focal point in the legal disputes over border control between the Democratic president and Abbott. The Biden administration also is fighting for the right to cut razor-wire fencing at the border.

Tesla in fatal Seattle-area crash was operating on the self-driving system

Associated Press

DETROIT — Authorities in Washington have determined that a Tesla that hit and killed a motorcyclist near Seattle in April was operating on the company’s “Full Self Driving” system at the time of the crash.

Investigators from the Washington State Patrol made the discovery after downloading information from the event-data recorder on the 2022 Tesla Model S, agency spokesman Capt. Deion Glover said Tuesday.

“The investigation is still ongoing in this case,” Glover said. The Snohomish County Prosecutor will determine if

any charges are filed in the case, he said.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk said last week that “Full Self Driving” should be able to run without human supervision by the end of this year.

He has been promising a fleet of robotaxis for several years. During the company’s earnings conference call, he acknowledged that his predictions on the issue “have been overly optimistic in the past.”

A message was left Tuesday seeking comment from Tesla.

After the crash in a suburban area about 15 miles northeast of Seattle, the driver told a trooper that he was using Tes-

la’s Autopilot system and looked at his cellphone while the Tesla was moving.

“The next thing he knew there was a bang and the vehicle lurched forward as it accelerated and collided with the motorcycle in front of him,” the trooper wrote in a probable-cause document.

The 56-year-old driver was arrested for investigation of vehicular homicide “based on the admitted inattention to driving, while on Autopilot mode, and the distraction of the cell phone while moving forward, putting trust in the machine to drive for him,” the affidavit said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Disneyland workers vote to ratify new contracts

CA ANAHEIM — Disneyland workers have voted to ratify new contracts that include wage hikes and changes to sick leave policies after months of negotiations.

Workers including ride operators, candy makers and parking attendants voted to ratify the three-year contracts that bump the minimum base wage to \$24 an hour this year from a previous \$19.90, a coalition of four unions representing 14,000 workers said late Monday.

The deal was reached after the workers at Disney's California theme parks and resort area authorized a potential strike following months of negotiations over wages, sick leave and other benefits.

"For months hard-working cast members have stood together at the bargaining table and in the parks to ensure Disney recognized what they bring to the theme park experience, and these contracts are a concrete and direct result of this tireless work," the coalition said in a statement.

Man killed self after police took DNA sample

HI HONOLULU — A man who was identified as a new possible suspect in the killing and sexual assault of a Virginia woman who was visiting Hawaii more than three decades ago killed himself recently after police took a DNA swab from him, officials said.

The Hawaii Police Depart-

ment on Monday said they matched DNA taken from Dana Ireland's body to that of 57-year-old Albert Lauro Jr. of Hawaiian Paradise Park on the Big Island. Police Chief Ben Moszkowicz said Lauro died by suicide and was found at home.

Authorities zeroed in on Lauro in recent months and got a DNA sample from him off of a discarded fork after they watched him eat lunch. He killed himself last week after police went to his home to test the sample against a swab taken from him in person.

Attempts by the AP to reach Lauro's relatives were unsuccessful.

Prosecutor opposes 'Rust' armorer's release

NM SANTA FE — A special prosecutor is opposing a request by a former movie armorer that she be released from prison while seeking a new trial and appeal of her involuntary manslaughter conviction in a 2021 shooting on the set of the film "Rust."

Kari Morrissey wrote in a response brief filed Friday that Hannah Gutierrez-Reed's motion for release "is premature given that the court has yet to receive completed briefing on the defendant's motion for new trial, hear arguments on the defendant's motion and rule on the motion in defendant's favor."

Lawyers for Gutierrez-Reed have argued her case should be reconsidered because prosecutors failed to share evidence that might have been exculpatory.

Gutierrez-Reed wants a judge to dismiss her conviction

or convene a new trial in the shooting death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins by actor Alec Baldwin.

Decision will likely strike many from sex-offender list

MI DETROIT — Michigan's policy of putting people on a sex-offender registry even if their crime was nonsexual is unconstitutional, the state Supreme Court said Monday.

In a 5-2 decision, the court said a portion of a 2021 law is "cruel or unusual punishment" barred by the Michigan Constitution.

A Wayne County man in 2015 was convicted of holding his wife and two children at gunpoint for hours. After his release from prison, he would face 15 years on the sex-offender registry because his unlawful-imprisonment conviction involved minors.

"Although defendant's offense was undoubtedly severe, that offense contained no sexual element and no indication that defendant poses a risk of committing sexual crimes in the future," Chief Justice Elizabeth Clement said.

Court: 2-year lobbying ban violates free speech

MO COLUMBIA — A federal court on Monday ruled against a Missouri ban on lawmakers taking sometimes lucrative lobbying jobs shortly after leaving office.

The 8th District Court of Appeals panel found that the ethics law, enacted by voters through a constitutional amendment in 2018, violated the free-speech

rights of former legislators-turned-lobbyists trying to sway their successors.

Supporters of the two-year ban on lobbying were attempting to stop lawmakers and Capitol employees from misusing their political influence in hopes of landing well-paying lobbying jobs.

But the appeals panel ruled that the mere possibility of corruption did not justify violating free speech.

Judge hands former NRA head a 10-year ban

NY NEW YORK — A New York judge on Monday banned Wayne LaPierre, the former head of the National Rifle Association, from holding a paid position with the organization for a decade, but declined to appoint an independent monitor to oversee the gun rights group.

The split decision from Judge Joel Cohen came on the final day of arguments in the second stage of a civil trial brought by New York Attorney General Letitia James. The first phase of the trial, decided in February by a Manhattan jury, found LaPierre and another deputy liable for mispending millions of dollars on lavish trips and other personal expenses.

Ruling from the bench, Cohen said the state's request for a monitor was not the correct remedy, suggesting the oversight mechanism would be "time-consuming, disruptive and will impose significant costs on the NRA without corresponding benefits."

— From wire reports

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and Military News

Midnight chat helped US gymnasts reclaim gold

The Dallas Morning News

PARIS — Early on in the women's gymnastics team final at Bercy Arena, the video screens showed the world's greatest gymnast in full yawn. A whopper, too. Like the prospects of an eighth Olympic medal and 38th overall, counting world championships, was not only in the bag, it's a bore.

On the contrary, senior leadership was so "full of nerves" Monday night that it convened an emergency meeting.

Or, to be exact, Jordan Chiles woke up Biles for a confab with Suni Lee.

"I need backup," Chiles told her.

The good news is, the women hashed everything out, then got up Tuesday full of confidence to take out the rest of the world for the fourth team gold in U.S. history, in the process redeeming the gold lost in Tokyo with a win Tuesday of nearly six full points over Italy and Brazil, a distant 2-3.

Only that's not entirely true. Turns out the Americans were not confident of anything going into Tuesday.

At least not until Biles hit her vault.

Maybe you remember that, in Tokyo, the thought of competing in the vault filled Biles with such dread that she withdrew from five events, sealing America's silvery fate in the process. Biles took a hiatus, got her mind right, then looked pretty much like her old self upon her return, even after tweaking an old calf injury that doesn't seem to bother her. She handled qualifying Sunday like she was playing the JV.

But apparently it's not as easy as Biles makes it look. Nothing is, probably. The woman whose journey made it OK for athletes to seek help for their mental health told her therapist Tuesday morning that she was feeling "calm and ready."

Only that wasn't exactly true, either.

Not until she sped down the runway, hit the vault and executed something called a Cheng — not the more difficult Yurchenko double pike, which she's apparently saving for all-around — to the tune of a 14.900.

"I was relieved," Biles admitted. "No flashbacks or anything."

"I was like, 'Oh, yeah, we're definitely gonna do this.'" Jordan?

"Yeah, that's definitely what I was thinking," Chiles said. "I was like, 'Yo, hallelujah.'"

"No flashbacks."

From one apparatus to the next, the Americans widened their lead Sunday. They were so far ahead after the first two rotations, it didn't matter that Lee got a deduction on the uneven bars or that Chiles fell off the beam or that Biles stepped out during the floor routine, usually her strongest. The Americans are just that good. Only one team has beaten them at an Olympics or world championship since 2011, and the Russians, banned for invading Ukraine, aren't even here.

Get this: According to an analysis by the Washington Post, the Americans were so dominant across the board, if they'd replaced Biles' scores with Hezly Rivera's from the Olympic Trials, they still would have won by two points.

As it is, Rivera, the 16-year-old New Jersey transplant who lives and trains in Plano, Texas, didn't even get out of her warmups except for the celebration pictures. Chellsie Memmel, women's technical lead, called the deci-

sion to leave Rivera on the bench "incredibly difficult" because she's an "an amazing gymnast."

"I'm so proud of her and everything that she's done," Memmel said. "And that's exactly what I told her. I said she was just as important a part of this team as everyone else, and it's gonna sting."

On one hand, Memmel did what she had to do. No matter how good your team is, these are the Olympics. You play your best. And it's an All-Star lineup. Jade Carey, defending Olympic champ on the floor, only got up to compete in the vault.

It's probably worth adding here that Rivera was a late addition to the team after injuries ruled out more seasoned competitors.

On the other hand, it's no fun sitting on the bench.

"In a way, I was sad," Rivera said after the ceremonies. "But I'm also so happy to be supporting Team USA. You know, this is just such a surreal experience and I'm so happy no matter what happens. And even though I wasn't able to compete, seeing these girls makes me so happy, and winning this gold."

Sullivan, US women's rugby claim bronze over Australia

By MATT WAGNER

Stars and Stripes

SAINT-DENIS, France — Late in the Olympic bronze-medal match against Australia on Tuesday evening, the U.S. women's rugby sevens team needed a miracle.

U.S. Army Capt. Sammy Sullivan and the Eagles trailed the Australians by five with just seconds remaining at Stade de France and needed to go the length of the field.

That miracle came in the form of substitute Spiff Sedrick.

The 5-foot-3, 137-pound Sedrick broke a lunging tackle attempt by Australia's Sharni Smale and then ran into the waiting arms of Teagan Levi. The American powered through the 5-foot-8, 146-pound Australian and looked ahead.

Suddenly, the entire field was her playground, not an opponent in sight.

Sedrick blitzed down the middle and outlasted a late charge by an Australian defender to score the try in second-half stoppage time. Then, the 26-year-old, who admitted she had shanked two attempts in warmups, kicked the conversion to clinch the bronze medal with the last touch of the match.

The United States shocked the No. 2 team in the world 14-12.

"Australia has really clinical defense and attack, so I was actually pretty surprised to get the break on," Sedrick said. "I know any time I get the break on against Australia, all of them are going to be chasing back."

"To be honest, I thought we had won when I scored, and then I realized it was tied," the former volleyball player added. "I'm not the team's dedicated kicker. I'm not the second, third or fourth in line for

that position, but I was the one on the field to take it and, luckily, it went in."

It was the first medal for the American men's or women's rugby sevens program since the sport's introduction to the Games at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Tuesday's win was also the first medal for any U.S. rugby team since the men's rugby union program won back-to-back golds in 1920 and 1924.

That 1924 squad was victorious in Paris.

The sport — either the 15s or sevens version — wasn't a part of the Olympic program from 1928 to 2012.

"It's a dream come true, just like every other moment of this whole tournament has been," said Sullivan, who came off for a substitute minutes before Sedrick's heroics and celebrated with her teammates on the sideline. "It's surreal."

Army's Tozier 18th in women's trap

BY MATT WAGNER

Stars and Stripes

CHATEAUROUX, France — Army Staff Sgt. Rachel Tozier looks at the remaining time in her military career in terms of “quads,” or four-year Olympic cycles.

The 32-year-old soldier has about three more before military retirement. She joined the Army in March 2017 and was stationed at Fort Moore, Ga., as a member of the Army Marksmanship Unit immediately after basic training.

The women's trap competition at the 2024 Paris Olympics on Tuesday and Wednesday at the Chateauroux Shooting Centre reinforced this mindset. Sure, she finished 18th out of 30 competitors with 116 clays shattered, but she got a taste and wants more.

“This is going to be the goal from now until the next Games — to make the next team,” Tozier said. “And from then on, every quad until I retire.”

“I got a good three quads in me, hopefully shoot the whole time through and not get stuck in an office.”

Her next shot at making the Olympic team will be the 2028 Los Angeles Games. The Olympic dream began long before the Pattonsburg, Mo., native joined the Army, however.

Her stepfather, Monte Hoover, encour-

aged Tozier to learn the sport of trap shooting at the age of 12 and she enjoyed it so much she wrote down the goal of making the Olympics her senior year of high school.

So, 20 years after first picking up a gun and 14 years after making it a life goal, she accomplished it.

“This is greater than I ever could have imagined,” Tozier said of the experience.

“Just being here is an honor, but to be able to compete against the best of the best in the world, it's been the goal forever.”

As for the shooting itself, Tozier rued the first rounds on both days. Competitors had five rounds of 25 clays apiece to hit, and their totals then decided which six advanced to the finals.

In both cases, the Central Missouri graduate missed three targets for scores of 22. She managed to bounce back Tuesday by missing just one of her final 66 shots, putting her in 12th place and two targets away from the cut line.

Wednesday morning's 22 took her out of consideration before the final round, though.

Tozier mentioned how nerves got the best of her, but she also credited the other shooters for simply being better over the days. Eight athletes recorded totals of 120 or better, and two of them missed the final after a shootout tiebreaker.

The top six advanced to the finals.

“Even if I could have had a couple targets back, it wouldn't have mattered,” Tozier said. “These women are shooting lights out, and they're not missing but one or two out of 125. It's hard to top that.”

Like Tozier, Army Sgt. Ivan Roe already turned the page onto the next Olympic cycle Wednesday.

In his third and final event at the Paris Olympics, Roe started off strong but faded late in the 50-meter rifle three-position qualification round. The Army Marksmanship Unit member amassed 587 points and 32 bull's-eyes to finish 20th.

The top eight qualified for Thursday's final.

Roe, 28, sat in sixth with 198 points and 12 bull's-eyes, but he dropped to 11th in the prone position with a 197-point performance. Needing to do well in the standing position, Roe instead struggled, starting with his practice shots that carried over with an 8.

He finished that position with a score of 192.

“I wanted (my prone score) to be a little bit higher, and I didn't want to have to rely on standing going into it,” Roe said. “But I had to rely on it, and it was just one of those days that (my) standing (game) wasn't there.”

Dodgers trade for Flaherty to beef up starting rotation

Associated Press

PHOENIX — The Los Angeles Dodgers acquired starting pitcher Jack Flaherty, San Diego added All-Star closer Tanner Scott, and Arizona, Baltimore and Pittsburgh made significant deals for the stretch run ahead of Tuesday's trade deadline.

Many top stars mentioned as trade targets stayed with their teams, including Toronto slugger Vladimir Guerrero Jr., San Francisco pitcher Blake Snell and Chicago White Sox left-hander Garrett Crochet. Still, there were 30 trades finalized Tuesday, according to Major League Baseball.

San Diego got Scott from Miami, Cleveland acquired right-

hander Alex Cobb from San Francisco, and Minnesota obtained reliever Trevor Richards from payroll-cutting Toronto, which also sent outfielder Kevin Kiermaier to the Dodgers and utilityman Isiah Kiner-Falefa to Pittsburgh.

The Pirates, in the middle of the NL wild-card race, also added outfielder Bryan De La Cruz from Miami for two prospects. De La Cruz led the Marlins with 18 homers.

The Orioles acquired left-handed starter Trevor Rogers, sending prospect Connor Norby and outfielder Kyle Stowers to the Marlins. The 26-year-old Rogers has been a dependable option for Miami most of the season and has a 4.53 ERA over

21 starts. Baltimore also added outfielder Eloy Jiménez from the White Sox, reliever Gregory Soto from the Phillies, and outfielder Austin Slater and infielder Livan Soto from the Reds.

Arizona plugged a hole in its lineup by adding first baseman Josh Bell, who was hitting .239 with 14 homers for the Marlins. Miami will receive cash in return. Arizona was in need of a power hitter after first baseman Christian Walker was put on the 10-day injured list.

Arizona also acquired right-handed reliever Dylan Floro from Washington for Triple-A infielder Andrés Chaparro. Floro has a 2.06 ERA over 51 appearances this season.

The Dodgers added Flaherty

from Detroit for minor league catcher Thayron Liranzo and infielder Trey Sweeney. Flaherty is 7-5 with a 2.95 ERA and 133 strikeouts over 106⅓ innings in 18 starts.

Scott gives the Padres one of the best closers in baseball. He has a 1.18 ERA and 18 saves with 53 strikeouts over 44 appearances. The Padres also added left-hander Martín Pérez from the Pirates for a prospect.

The Guardians hope the 36-year-old Cobb, an All-Star in 2023, can provide a lift over the next two months. He hasn't pitched in the major leagues this season because of left hip surgery last October. The Giants received left-handed pitching prospect Jacob Bresnahan.

Yankees top Phillies in wild 12 innings

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Jazz Chisholm had five RBIs in his second straight two-homer game, Gleyber Torres hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly in the 12th inning and the New York Yankees outlasted the Philadelphia Phillies 7-6 on Tuesday night for their first four-game winning streak since early June.

Chisholm had an RBI grounder in the first, a solo homer in the sixth off Aaron Nola and a three-run homer in the seventh against Matt Strahm that put the Yankees ahead 5-4.

"It feels great, being part of a winning team, helping them win, trying to make the playoffs right now, trying to give ourselves No. 28," Chisholm said, referring to what would be the Yankees' next World Series title.

Chisholm has homered twice in two of three games with the Yankees after having three multihomer performances in 405 games with Miami, which traded him last weekend.

"I can tell you he's having fun playing the game," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "I can tell you he enjoys this environment, this stage, the arena and the action. He's embraced us and everyone in that room has embraced him."

Clay Holmes' wild pitch allowed Johan Rojas to score the tying run in the ninth, Alex Verdugo's sacrifice fly put the Yankees back ahead in the 11th and Austin Hays made it 6-6 with an RBI single in the bottom half, when Trent Grisham's diving catch on Alec Bohm's two-out liner to center stranded Hays at third.

After Torres' sacrifice fly in the 12th against Orion Kerkering (2-2), Michael Tonkin (4-4) pitched his second inning of relief. He struck out two in a perfect inning, sending the Phillies to just their third three-game losing streak this season and their 10th loss in 14 games.

Two-time MVP Bryce Harper went 0 for 5 and is 1 for 25 in his past six games.

Guardians 5, Tigers 0: José Ramírez moved past Albert Belle into sole possession of second place on the Cleveland career home run list with his 243rd, hitting his third in two games to help the visiting Guardians beat Detroit.

Josh Naylor hit a first-inning homer off Alex Faedo (5-3) and Ramírez hit a two-run drive in the eighth against Jason Foley. The 31-year-old Ramírez has spent his entire 12-year big league career with Cleveland.

Orioles 6, Blue Jays 2: Corbin Burnes (11-4) took a two-hitter into the seventh, Ra-

món Urias and Anthony Santander homered and host Baltimore beat depleted Toronto.

Baltimore built a 4-0 lead in the third inning and improved to 6-6 since the All-Star break to remain atop the AL East.

Mets 2, Twins 0: Sean Manaea (7-4) struck out a season-best 11 in seven dominant innings, pitching host New York to a victory over Minnesota.

Mark Vientos homered and J.D. Martinez had an RBI single to help the Mets (57-50) win for the 15th time in 21 games. They matched their season high at seven games above .500.

Reds 6, Cubs 3: Santiago Espinal extended his hitting streak to 10 games with a two-run homer in the second inning and host Cincinnati held on to beat Chicago.

TJ Friedl drove in two runs with a first-inning base hit, Tyler Stephenson also had an RBI as part of the three-run second inning and Spencer Steer drove in another with a double in the eighth.

Rays 9, Marlins 3: Trade acquisition Christopher Morel homered in his Tampa Bay debut, helping the new-look Rays come from behind to beat visiting Miami.

Ben Rortvedt and Yandy Diaz each contributed two-run singles off reliever Declan Cronin (2-3) during a five-run sixth inning that propelled the Rays to a 6-3 lead. Jose Caballero added an RBI double, then stole home to extend the lead in the seventh.

Braves 5, Brewers 1: Jarred Kelenic broke out of a monthlong slump by hitting a homer and double in visiting Atlanta's victory over Milwaukee.

Austin Riley went 4 for 5 as the Braves won despite leaving 11 men on base.

Cardinals 8, Rangers 1: Tommy Pham hit a pinch-hit grand slam in his first game back with St. Louis as the host Cardinals beat Texas.

Pham's blast off reliever Cody Bradford capped a five-run fifth. It was his first at-bat since being dealt to St. Louis from the White Sox as part of a three-team trade Monday. Pham began his career with the Cardinals, who drafted him in the sixth round in 2006.

Royals 4, White Sox 3: Chicago lost its 16th straight game, extending a franchise record, as Michael Massey homered and Michael Wacha pitched seven strong innings to lead visiting Kansas City to a victory.

Bobby Witt Jr. ran his hitting streak to 12 games and had the first RBI in an eighth-inning rally that gave the Royals the lead for good.

Seattle 10, Boston 6: Jorge Polanco ho-

mered in the fourth inning and added an RBI double in the sixth, Dylan Moore drove in three with a bases-loaded double in a five-run fifth and visiting Seattle beat Boston.

The eight-run outburst midway through the game helped Seattle win for the fourth time in five games as the Mariners capitalized on some defensive gaffes that had Boston fans booing.

Pirates 6, Astros 2: Michael Taylor homered for the second straight game, Bailey Falter returned to the rotation and threw one-run ball into the sixth inning as visiting Pittsburgh beat Houston.

Falter (5-7), making his first start since July 6 due to triceps tendonitis, kept Houston in check, throwing 47 of his 66 pitches for strikes. The 27-year-old left-hander allowed six hits and one run with three strikeouts and no walks in 5½ innings.

Athletics 5, Giants 2: JP Sears pitched seven shutout innings and visiting Oakland hit four home runs in a win over San Francisco.

Brent Rooker and Lawrence Butler stayed hot, hitting their 11th and 10th home runs in July, respectively. Daz Cameron and JJ Bleday also went deep. The A's have hit 45 home runs this month, the second-most in Oakland history in July.

Diamondbacks 17, Nationals 0: Eugenio Suárez hit three homers and matched his career high with five RBIs as host Arizona tied a team record with 22 hits in a victory over Washington.

The Diamondbacks, who scored five runs in the ninth inning for a 9-8 victory a night earlier, outscored the Nationals 24-0 since the seventh inning of Monday's game, which was the first time since 2011 that Arizona won when trailing by four runs in the ninth inning or later. The Diamondbacks won for the sixth time in seven games.

Padres 6, Dodgers 5 (10): Pinch-hitter Donovan Solano singled past diving third baseman Kiké Hernández with the bases loaded and one out in the 10th inning and host San Diego stunned NL West-leading Los Angeles.

The Padres tied it in the ninth on home runs by Manny Machado, who connected on Blake Treinen's first pitch, and a high-arc-ing shot to right with one out by rookie Jackson Merrill. Machado also homered off starter Tyler Glasnow in the second.

Angels 10, Rockies 7: Matt Thaiss drove in a career-high five runs, Jo Adell hit a go-ahead home run in the seventh inning and host Los Angeles overcame a four-run deficit to beat Colorado.