

Policy shift may affect green card access

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Military families seeking permanent U.S. residency face new uncertainty under a federal immigration policy that suggests some green card applicants must file from their home countries rather than from the United States.

A May 21 memorandum from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services states that adjustment of status — the process of obtaining lawful permanent residency without leaving the country — is a matter of “administrative grace” and should be granted only after officers consider the totality of an applicant’s circumstances.

USCIS says the memo simply restates existing law. However, immigration attorneys and advocacy groups say it raises questions about whether some applicants, including military spouses and children, could be required to complete the process overseas.

The policy “will result in some aliens who do not merit the discretionary benefit ultimately applying with the Department of State overseas rather than USCIS in the United States,” the agency said in an unsigned email Thursday.

USCIS spokesman Zach Kahle described the policy more bluntly in a May 22 news release.

“From now on, an alien who is in the U.S. temporarily and wants a Green Card must return to their home country to apply, except in extraordinary circumstances,” he wrote. “This policy allows our immigration system to function as the law intended instead of incentivizing loopholes.”

The memo creates confusion because some categories of immigrants have no practical way to pursue permanent residency outside the United States, said Margaret Stock, an Alaska-based immigration attorney who specializes in military-re-

lated immigration issues.

Among them are holders of K-1 visas, commonly known as the fiancé visa.

“K-1s are required to marry in the U.S. and adjust status in the U.S.; they do not have the option of going to a foreign consulate to adjust their status,” Stock said Wednesday. “That simply can’t be done as a legal matter.”

The agency did not directly answer questions about how the policy could affect military families but said it would not affect current green card holders and would not prevent immigrants who “legitimately and properly qualify” from obtaining permanent residency.

The memo said USCIS officers should consider factors such as family ties, immigration history, moral character and other relevant circumstances when deciding whether to approve an application.

USCIS said the policy would help reduce fraud and discourage people from remaining in

the U.S. illegally after being denied residency.

Stock said the policy could also affect children seeking citizenship through the Child Citizenship Act.

Children born overseas generally must first become lawful permanent residents while living in the United States with an American parent before acquiring citizenship.

“Now these children may be forced to go overseas and apply for an immigrant visa before they can acquire U.S. citizenship through their parents,” she said.

The American Immigration Council, a Washington-based advocacy organization, said in a May 27 analysis that the memo leaves many questions unanswered and could subject pending applicants to greater scrutiny.

“Some of these scenarios could raise significant constitutional concerns,” the council wrote on its website.

Iran halts US talks over Israel operations in Lebanon

By LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

Iranian negotiators have stopped exchanging messages with the U.S. in protest of Israeli military operations in Lebanon, Iranian state media reported Monday, potentially derailing talks aimed at ending a more than three-month-long war.

Israel this week expanded its war in Lebanon against the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah, pushing further into the country than it has in 26 years.

Although a ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon took effect

six weeks ago, clashes between Israeli forces and Hezbollah have continued.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday that he ordered additional strikes on the Hezbollah stronghold of Dahieh, a southern Beirut suburb, prompting panic among many residents, the BBC reported. Hezbollah said it carried out rocket and missile attacks on northern Israel on Sunday, The Associated Press reported. It said early Monday it attacked Israeli troops in Zawtar al-Sharqieh, just north of the Litani River, and struck what

they said was Israeli military infrastructure in Tiberius, a few dozen miles south of the border.

Hours later, Iranian state-affiliated Tasnim News Agency reported that Iran’s negotiating team would suspend all “discussions and exchanges of texts through intermediaries” with the United States.

According to Tasnim, Iran is demanding an immediate halt to Israel’s military actions in Lebanon and Gaza. Until those demands are met, there will be no dialogue with Washington and the Strait of Hormuz will be completely closed, the report said.

Iran’s Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi said earlier Monday that hostilities in Lebanon constituted a clear violation of the U.S.-Iran ceasefire agreement.

“The United States and Israel bear responsibility for the consequences of any breach of the truce,” he wrote on X.

Later Monday, President Donald Trump said that Israel and Hezbollah have agreed to dial back fighting after he held talks with Netanyahu and communicated with the Lebanon-militant group through mediators, the AP reported.

SOUTHCOM boss meets with Cuban officials

By **CHAD GARLAND**
Stars and Stripes

A four-star Marine general held a rare meeting recently with senior Cuban military officials on the perimeter of the Navy base at Guantanamo Bay amid heightened U.S. pressure on the island nation.

Gen. Francis L. Donovan, the top general at U.S. Southern Command, had a “brief exchange” about security issues with several senior Cuban military officials, SOUTHCOM said Friday on X.

Among the senior officials was Cuban Gen. Roberto Legra Sotolongo, first deputy minister of the chief of the general staff.

The meeting was “positive,” the Cuban military said in a statement on X, and the commands

agreed to maintain communications.

Neither side’s post provided further details about the topics discussed, but SOUTHCOM’s statement said Donovan “also led a perimeter security assessment of the naval base and discussed force protection, safety of service members and their families and operational readiness” with officials at the base, which covers 45 square miles.

The command covers military activity in Central and South America and the Caribbean.

In January 2025, the U.S. halted a longtime practice of monthly meetings between the Guantanamo base commander, a Navy captain and a regional Cuban military commander to discuss concerns and misunderstandings,

The New York Times reported.

The “fenceline meetings” were held on alternating sides of the 17-mile fence separating the base from the Cuban-controlled area.

The sides are separated by a salt flat that had been protected by some 50,000 mines before former President Bill Clinton ordered them removed in 1996.

Between meetings, the two sides maintained email communications “religiously,” Stars and Stripes reported in 2008, quoting the base’s executive officer at the time.

In early May, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the son of Cuban immigrants, was photographed alongside Donovan in front of a map of Cuba, which some saw as an ominous warning

of a possible invasion.

At a news conference, Rubio downplayed the photo, saying the map had been chosen because the island about 90 miles south of Florida is the country in SOUTHCOM closest to the U.S.

But the meeting of the high-ranking military officers in Cuba follows a U.S. military buildup around the island. U.S. intelligence and reconnaissance flights in the region have increased as the U.S. has ratcheted up pressure following President Donald Trump’s calls for regime change in Cuba.

Last week, the Pentagon said the more than 4,500 Marines and sailors of the Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group were heading home after nearly 10 months deployed to the Caribbean.

US reaches milestone in preparation for Australia submarine rotational force

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

U.S. military personnel will begin rotating to Western Australia this year ahead of the planned deployment of American and British nuclear-powered submarines under the AUKUS security partnership, defense leaders announced over the weekend.

The move marks a key milestone in preparation for Submarine Rotational Force-West, or SRF-West, which will station up to four U.S. Navy submarines and one British submarine at HMAS Stirling, an Australian naval base near Perth, beginning next year.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Richard Marles, and U.K. Defense Minister John Healey announced the plan Saturday following a meeting at the U.S. Em-

bassy in Singapore.

“This month, the United States authorized establishment of the U.S. Navy support elements for SRF-West and will begin rotating the first U.S. Navy personnel to HMAS Stirling later this year,” the three leaders said.

U.S. Pacific Fleet Submarine Force, headquartered at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, did not immediately respond to a request for additional details on Sunday.

The defense leaders also announced changes to Australia’s planned acquisition of Virginia-class submarines from the U.S. Under the revised plan, Australia will acquire three used vessels.

The submarine rotational force is intended to help Australia develop the expertise and infrastructure necessary to operate its own conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines.

GAO: DOD should review impact of workforce cuts

By **JENNIFER H. SVAN**
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon is being directed by a congressional watchdog agency to assess what was learned from the sweeping reductions in civilian personnel made after President Donald Trump took office.

In a report published Friday, the Government Accountability Office said the Defense Department has yet to consider how slashing nearly 10% of the civilian workforce last year affected agencies’ workload, effectiveness, readiness and stress on the military force, among other key factors. Effects included immediate delays in Navy shipyard maintenance and readiness challenges for the Space Force due to the loss of specialized skillsets and expertise, the GAO said.

Also, some Air Force child development centers were closed and waitlists for became longer,

according to the report.

All told, about 78,000 positions were eliminated in a workforce that exceeded 793,000 employees in January 2025.

“The net effect will be a reduction in the number of civilian full-time equivalent positions and increased resources in the areas where we need them most,” Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said in a memo at the time.

But federal law prohibits DOD from reducing the full-time civilian workforce without an appropriate analysis of the impacts, the GAO report said.

It concluded that the department “does not have a plan to assess lessons learned.”

In a response, the Pentagon said it would create a plan for collecting and sharing what it learned. The GAO said the plan should include an evaluation of the deferred resignation programs and hiring freeze.

Protests lead to curfew near ICE facility

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Newark officials instituted a mandatory curfew Sunday around Delaney Hall after ongoing protests led to clashes between protesters and police officers late Saturday, even as Gov. Mikie Sherrill announced that family members will again be able to visit loved ones at the immigration detention center.

Three people were arrested after the skirmish, according to Sherrill.

Protests have roiled Delaney Hall since last week over conditions inside the facility. Family visitation had been suspended after protesters blocked entry to the facility on May 24, but Sherrill said Sunday that the Department of Homeland Security agreed to restart it.

The curfew announced by

Mayor Ras Baraka came after continued clashes between police and protesters outside the jail, including a Friday night confrontation that led police to temporarily clear the area.

New Jersey Attorney General Jennifer Davenport said Sunday that protesters were “collecting wooden poles and other blunt-force objects for use as weapons.” According to one group taking part in the protests, law enforcement fired rubber bullets at protesters.

Baraka’s curfew, which began Sunday at midnight, will be enforced between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. in all areas within a half mile of Delaney Hall.

Doremus Avenue will be closed to all pedestrians, and only vehicles with “verified official business” will be allowed in

the area.

Tensions came to a head Saturday evening as the protesters clashed with counterprotesters from the Proud Boys extremist group, as well as New Jersey State Police troopers called to the scene.

During the scuffle, masked people pushed into an area reserved for law enforcement, according to Sherrill.

Three of the people detained at the scene were arrested, she confirmed later Sunday.

The group attacked barriers surrounding the facility, threw projectiles and lit tires on fire in the street, she said Sunday.

Officers at the scene were not wearing protective gear and were there “ensuring protesters and counter protesters had areas to exercise their rights safe-

ly,” Sherrill said. Additional officers had to be called to the scene as the situation escalated.

Members of Eyes on ICE, a coalition of protesters, have organized the demonstrations outside of Delaney Hall. Sherrill on Sunday described the initial group of protesters as “a mix of local and out-of-state, and it often seems what we are seeing is this long-term peaceful protester.”

She said members of the group helped families of detainees understand their rights and provided them with legal representation.

The group first organized outside Delaney Hall in early May and has maintained a constant presence there, calling for the release of the people detained inside.

Calif. primary sets stage for tight House battle

Los Angeles Times

California’s decision to redraw its congressional map to flip as many as five House seats to Democrats in November is poised to play a big and potentially decisive role in the nation’s broader, bare-knuckle fight for control of Congress.

Tuesday’s primary races — where the top two candidates will advance to November runoffs — won’t determine which Republicans are ousted in most cases, but they will provide an important first look at voter sentiment and bring the fall’s most crucial head-to-head contests into focus.

“There will be some real cues and signals about what to expect,” said Christian Grose, a redistricting scholar and political science professor at the University of Southern California. “We’re going to know how strong the Democrats’ chances are going to be based on who advances.”

As one example, Grose pointed to the redrawn 22nd Congressional District in the Central Valley, where incumbent Rep. David Valadao, R-Hanford, is facing challenges from moderate Assembly Member Jasmeet Kaur Bains, D-Delano, and progressive college professor Randy Villegas.

Grose said Bains is probably a stronger challenger than Villegas in a district that’s still a reach for Democrats — even if “either one could probably beat Valadao if 2026 is a big Democratic wave.”

Grose will also be closely watching the race between incumbent Reps. Young Kim, R-Anaheim Hills, and Ken Calvert, R-Corona, in the redrawn Congressional District 40, which covers a swath of inland Orange County and portions of San Bernardino and Riverside counties, including parts of Kim’s and Calvert’s current districts.

Judge denies Cosby’s request for new trial on ‘irregularity’ claim

Los Angeles Times

A Los Angeles County Superior Court judge has denied Bill Cosby’s request for a new trial after a civil jury recently found he was liable for \$19 million in damages in a sexual assault case.

Judge Bradley S. Phillips ruled Friday that Cosby did not prove in his request that there was “any irregularity” in the court proceedings that would have prevented him from getting a fair trial and that the damages awarded to his accuser were not “excessive.”

“The Court finds that there was sufficient evidence ... to support the jury’s finding that defendant’s conduct caused plaintiff’s damages,” Phillips wrote in Friday’s order.

In March, a jury awarded former waitress Donna Motsinger \$19.25 million in damages after

she sued Cosby in 2023, alleging that the disgraced comedian drugged and sexually assaulted her in 1972 after escorting her to one of his shows.

Motsinger, now 84, claimed Cosby picked her up at her home and gave her wine and a pill she thought was aspirin on the way to the venue.

“Next thing she knew, she was going in and out of consciousness while two men attending to Mr. Cosby were putting her in the limousine,” the original complaint said.

“The last thing Ms. Motsinger recalls were flashes of light,” before waking up in her house in nothing but underwear.

Cosby has denied Motsinger’s allegations, as well as those brought by dozens of other women who said they had been drugged and sexually assaulted by the former actor.

US-funded Ebola facility faces protests

Bloomberg News

A U.S.-funded Ebola isolation facility under construction in Kenya became the focus of protests after a court temporarily blocked the project pending a review of its potential health risks.

President William Ruto's administration will build the facility at a U.S. Air Force base 125 miles north of the capital, Nairobi, the Health Ministry said in a statement. A Kenyan court last week ordered the government to reject the deal with the United States after a human-rights group said the plan posed "grave

health risks" to the public.

The U.S. plans to treat its nationals at the installation after President Donald Trump's administration said it's seeking to "prevent the Ebola outbreak from reaching our shores." American personnel who will run the 50-bed complex reached the Laikipia Air Base on Saturday, CNN reported, citing a U.S. government official.

"Protecting Kenyans requires more than hoping diseases do not cross our borders," the ministry said in a statement at the weekend. "It requires a comprehensive approach that com-

bines effective surveillance and border screening with strong preparedness and response systems before a crisis emerges, not after it has already taken hold."

Hundreds of residents of Nanyuki, near Laikipia Air Base, marched waving Kenyan flags and called for the containment plans to be canceled, warning that they could expose the local community to the outbreak, The Star reported.

The U.S. is committing \$13.5 million to Kenya's Ebola preparedness and has sent 30 Public Health Service officers to sup-

port the 50-bed facility, it said last week. Some of them responded to an Ebola outbreak about 12 years ago.

An American doctor who contracted the disease in Congo was sent to Germany with his family for treatment last month.

Congo confirmed at least 282 cases and 42 deaths from the outbreak of the Bundibugyo strain as of May 30, according to a report by its National Institute of Public Health. The outbreak has spread to neighboring Uganda, where at least nine cases have been confirmed, with one death.

Bulgaria threatens US aircraft access over dispute

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. Air Force planes operating out of Bulgaria must leave by the end of the month in connection with a dispute over civilian travel rules between the countries, Prime Minister Rumen Radev said.

Radev, who took up the post in May, said an airport used by U.S. forces in the capital of Sofia for air refueling missions will be off-limits after the United States failed to approve a visa-free travel system for Bulgarian citizens.

"While I fully understand the complexity of all the regulatory procedures, we also have our priorities and we cannot re-

spond positively to the request for long stays of aircraft and tankers at Sofia airport," Radev said Friday, as quoted by the Bulgarian News Agency.

He said Bulgaria was giving the U.S. until the end of June to allow "our allies the opportunity to reschedule their activities and find another location."

U.S. European Command said Monday that it was aware of reports about the Bulgarian leader's comments.

EUCOM operates at various locations that routinely host transient U.S. military personnel "in accordance with access, basing, and overflight agreements with allies and partners," the command said.

"Taking into account oper-

ations security for U.S. assets and personnel, further details are not releasable," EUCOM said.

Last month at a NATO foreign ministers meeting, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte highlighted Bulgaria as one of the countries that have made locations available to U.S. forces for operations in Iran.

While President Donald Trump has criticized NATO for what he has said is a lack of support for operations against Iran, Pentagon bases and other operational sites across Europe have played a key role in enabling the war, which began Feb. 28 and has since been paused under a ceasefire.

If Bulgaria follows through

with its plan, the situation is unlikely to cause major disruptions to U.S. forces, given the access they have to other operational sites.

In neighboring Romania, U.S. forces maintain a presence at various locations, including Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base, which serves as a hub in the Black Sea region.

Radev did not indicate that any other U.S. military missions are to be affected by the decision related to U.S. aircraft operating out of Sofia.

The U.S. and other NATO forces routinely send troops Bulgaria for training missions, many of which are conducted at the sprawling Novo Selo Training Area, 130 miles from Sofia.

Mexican president accuses US of political interference

Bloomberg News

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum launched her strongest criticism to date against what she said are blunt U.S. attempts to interfere in Mexican domestic politics.

What had been a recurring theme in her recent speeches became on Sunday a rallying

cry to stir up her supporters at a rally in Mexico City, where she claimed that since the deaths of two CIA agents April 19, efforts by U.S. authorities and far-right groups to destabilize her government have intensified.

The most serious attempt at intervention to date, according to her, came days after that in-

cident when the Department of Justice indicted 10 Mexican officials — including Rubén Rocha Moya, the governor of Sinaloa state — on charges of alleged drug trafficking offenses.

The case involving the 10 indicted individuals has become the main point of tension between Sheinbaum and Presi-

dent Donald Trump's administration, as it marks the first time a U.S. authority has requested the arrest and extradition of a sitting, elected Mexican official.

The Mexican government has asserted that the Justice Department has not presented compelling evidence against the accused.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Officials urge not to pick or eat wild mushrooms

CA LOS ANGELES — A surge of poisonings linked to accidental picking and consumption of wild mushrooms now includes 50 identified cases, a figure that far surpasses California's last major outbreak a decade ago.

The state continues to see an unprecedented uptick in poisonings and deaths associated with death cap, or Amanita phalloides; and western destroying angel, Amanita ocreata, mushrooms, according to the California Department of Public Health.

But they say an exceptionally wet winter and then April rains have contributed to the rash of poisonings. In all, 50 have been reported since November. Of those cases, four people died and four required liver transplants.

Polish Consulate hit with red paint repeatedly

NY NEW YORK — Vandals defaced the entrance to the Polish Consulate in Midtown Manhattan, covering the building in red paint twice in three days, police said Saturday.

The vandalism at the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York on Madison Avenue began on Wednesday when someone spray-painted the front of the building and a statue of a man seated on a bench, before 7:50 p.m.

Police were called, but the vandals, who marred the consulate's front sign, as well as its wooden doors and marble entranceway, were long gone.

Detectives took a report and began investigating when police were called back to the consulate around 8 a.m. on Friday, when more red graffiti was found.

During one of the acts of vandalism, the suspects spray-painted the word "Terror" on signs outside the building, which is currently covered by construction scaffolding.

Mayor floats landmark named for Pope Leo XIV

IL CHICAGO — Fresh off the glow of his summit with Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican, Mayor Brandon Johnson signaled Friday that Chicago could be due for another street or landmark christened after a pontiff.

In a sit-down interview with the Tribune, Johnson said the first American pope deserves to be formally recognized in his hometown, though he said it was premature to commit to whether that should manifest in a road designation or other type of monument.

"It's an incredible honor, right, to have the most recognizable, influential religious leader in the world to be from Chicago," Johnson said from a cafe in Rome. "There will be plenty of ways in which we'll be able to honor our dear brother, His Holiness."

In Brighton Park, 43rd Street between Western and Kedzie avenues was named after Pope John Paul II, the first Polish-born pope who was especially beloved by the Polish immigrant community on the Southwest Side. He was also the last pontiff to visit Chicago, celebrating an hours-long Mass in

Grant Park in 1979 that Johnson called "the most spiritually inspiring day in Chicago history" in his Thursday invitation for Leo to make a similar pilgrimage to the city next year.

LA again tops nation in dog attacks on postal workers

CA LOS ANGELES — Last year, U.S. Postal Service employees suffered 70 dog attacks in Los Angeles, the top city in the nation for the third time in as many years.

Overall, postal workers across the country experienced more than 5,200 dog attack incidents last year, according to a U.S. Postal Service news release. This is the third year in a row LA has ranked as the top city nationwide for dog attacks, down 77 incidents in 2024 but up from 65 in 2023.

California was the top state for dog attacks on postal workers last year, recording 673 incidents overall.

Elsewhere in California, San Diego postal workers experienced 32 attacks, Oakland had 27, Sacramento had 21, Long Beach had 20 and San Francisco had 21, according to the release.

Six Flags bans YouTube for eating on coaster

OH SANDUSKY — After eating a lot of fast food, some of it on roller coasters, YouTube Allen Ferrell has been banned by Six Flags from all of its amusement parks nationwide. For life.

McDonald's chicken nuggets were apparently an ultra-processed food item too far for the folks at Six Flags' Cedar Point in Sandusky.

"This guest has been banned from all Six Flags parks for life,"

a Cedar Point spokesman explained in an email Thursday to Cleveland TV station WKYC. "Safety is a cornerstone of our business and we have zero tolerance for inappropriate and unsafe behavior."

"Our ride safety policy strictly prohibits all loose articles on rides, including food which can become a choking hazard," the spokesperson continued.

"I had no idea that eating a 10-piece chicken nugget on a roller coaster would be a national headline, but here we are," Ferrell said.

Court: Abortion notifying 'unconstitutionally vague'

NV LAS VEGAS — The highest court in Nevada has ordered a lower court to grant a preliminary injunction against a decades-old abortion law that requires parents to be notified if their child seeks an abortion.

The Nevada Supreme Court issued the ruling Thursday in a 22-page opinion. The law has been on the books since 1985 but was not enforced until last year.

In its opinion, the high court called the law "unconstitutionally vague" and said the appeal, brought by Planned Parenthood and a Nevada physician, has a reasonable likelihood of success.

The law, which went unenforced for decades, went into effect in July 2025. A federal judge ruled that, after the overturning of Roe v. Wade there was no longer a legal basis that allowed a longstanding injunction to prevent the 1985 parental notification law from going into effect.

— From wire reports

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Serena returns after almost 4 years away

Associated Press

PARIS — Serena Williams is returning to professional tennis at age 44 after nearly four years away from the sport.

The 23-time Grand Slam singles champion has accepted a wild card invitation to play doubles at the upcoming Queen's Club grass-court tournament, the WTA Tour announced Monday.

The Queen's Club tournament starts next Monday and the WTA said Williams will play "with a partner to be announced in due course."

Williams has not competed since bidding farewell at the 2022 U.S. Open. At the time, she said she didn't want to use the word "retiring" and instead declared that she was "evolving" away from tennis.

"Serena brought the game to another level, and it is incredible for the sport that she's pushing the boundaries and coming back," said Martina Navratilova, the previous oldest former No.1 to launch a comeback after retirement, at 43 years, 10 months.

"To many of the younger players, they never had the opportunity to play her; some may have never watched her on television so this will be a new and exciting experience," Navratilova said.

Williams, who has also won 14 Grand Slam doubles titles, became eligible to compete in February after re-registering with tennis' mandatory anti-doping program six months earlier — the first step toward a comeback.

Four-time major winner Naomi Osaka, who beat Williams in the 2018 U.S. Open final for her first major title, was excited at the prospect.

"It will bring people to watch tennis," Osaka said Thursday. "I'm going to be tuned into the first match, for sure. I think a lot of people are. Everyone knows Serena and Venus were my role models growing up, so it's going to be cool to see her on the grounds again."

A return on grass will raise speculation that Williams also plans to compete at Wimbledon, which starts June 28. She's won

seven singles titles at the All England Club.

Williams recently posted a video on Instagram showing herself training on a hard court with her daughter: "Rumor has it...I got a new trainer," Williams said in the post.

Williams' second daughter was born in 2023.

When it was revealed last year that Williams had signed up to return to the drug-testing pool, she wrote on social media: "Omg yall I'm NOT coming back. This wildfire is crazy."

"One of my biggest regrets was not being able to play her," two time major champion Coco Gauff said in Paris. "It would be cool for this sport to have a legend back playing."

American player, Iva Jovic, 18, also sounded thrilled.

"I think it's amazing. It's really cool," she said. "I have never seen Serena in real life. Obviously I grew up watching her. In my entire childhood she was dominating tennis, so it's going to be incredible."

Like Osaka, she thinks it will boost tennis in general.

"It's going to make a lot of headlines and it's something that people are going to talk about," Jovic said.

Added fellow American player Madison Keys: "Serena Williams playing tennis is only good for tennis. Let's be real. We all want to watch Serena play tennis."

"I mean, you literally get to watch history every single time she takes the court," Keys added. "So why not watch more?"

WTA chair Valerie Camillo said, "Serena is one of the greatest athletes of all-time, with a legacy that extends far beyond the court."

"Her return is an expression of her passion for competition, and I cannot wait to see her face a new generation of top players," Camillo added. "Serena is not just a great champion. She's a successful entrepreneur, a powerful advocate for the issues that matter — and one of the most iconic women in the world. We are thrilled to welcome her back to the WTA Tour at this hugely exciting moment for women's tennis."

Hamlin pays pole-start penalty, outduels teammates for win

Associated Press

LEBANON, Tenn. — Denny Hamlin looked in his mirror wondering why nobody else went with him when the green flag dropped at the start of the Cracker Barrel 400 on Sunday night.

He said nothing on his radio, instead paying the penalty by going to the back of the field. Then he drove his way back to the front where he outraced Christopher Bell over the last four thrilling laps off a final restart to win at the Nashville Superspeedway.

"Man, what an unbelievable day," Hamlin said. "Starting first, going to last and back to first."

This was Hamlin's second win this year and 62nd of his career, and he wound up leading a race-high 57 laps including the one that mattered most.

The 45-year-old Hamlin wound up racing side-by-side with his Joe Gibbs Racing teammates Bell and Chase Briscoe making

it three-wide before Hamlin took the lead down the backstretch to win by 0.115 seconds in his No. 11 Toyota.

"Well, that's why on the last lap, I committed to just run the bottom," Hamlin said.

Team co-owner Heather Gibbs said watching the teammates race so hard was like kids on a family vacation swatting at each other in the backseat. But she said they raced cleanly.

"We want them to race for the win," Heather Gibbs said. "That's what they do, and it makes us proud."

Hamlin, who won at Las Vegas and also the All-Star race at Dover, pulled within 97 points of Tyler Reddick in the season standings. Reddick finished sixth.

The race started 80 minutes late after rain delayed NASCAR's Cup Series for a second straight week. The wait was worth it with a record 31 lead changes among a record 15 leaders.

The race also featured 12 cautions at the

1.33-mile, D-shaped oval that is NASCAR's largest concrete track.

Bell finished second for a second straight race ahead of Briscoe. Ricky Stenhouse Jr. was fourth, and Shane Van Gisbergen rounded out the top five.

"I had the best car on the race track ... and we had the lead on the restart," Bell said.

"I got a great push from Denny on the restart, and I didn't win the race."

One win closer to Busch

Hamlin now is one Cup victory away from matching his one-time teammate Kyle Busch, who died May 22 at 41. Busch is ninth all-time with his 63 Cup victories, and Hamlin said he certainly aspires to get there.

"It just shows how good he was for so long," Hamlin said. "I saw the stats online where we ran together 500 and some races, and he finished ahead of me 10 more times than I beat him in the same equipment."

Pulisic finally scores, US wins warmup match

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Relief could be seen on Christian Pulisic's face as he sidestepped goalkeeper Mory Diaw and buried a shot into the net for a first-half goal.

"Now maybe we can stop talking about it," Pulisic said later.

The drought, that is.

Pulisic had a goal and an assist as he ended a five-month scoreless streak for club and country in a confidence-building 3-2 U.S. win over Senegal on Sunday, the Americans' next-to-last World Cup warmup before their June 12 opener.

America's top player finished his AC Milan season scoreless in a career-high 19 club games since Dec. 28 and was without a goal in eight straight U.S. matches since November 2024.

"I felt this confidence, like I have played really well in recent months, but all everyone seems to want to worry about is goals. So hopefully we can stop talking about it," Pulisic said.

"We have games ahead and I have to be ready."

Pulisic's goal seemed like an emotional relief, as if weight had been lifted off the shoulders of the 27-year-old.

"We are all happy for him and we didn't doubt him for a second," said midfielder Weston McKennie, who has known Pulisic since he was 13. "People that don't know him may not know his abilities or what he is capable of."

Alex Freeman side-footed a pass ahead of a streaking Ricardo Pepi down the right flank. Pepi ran onto the ball and took a touch, then perfectly weighted a pass into the penalty area ahead of a streaking Pulisic.

Pulisic took a touch, rounded Diaw and slotted into an open net with his right foot from a tight angle for his 33rd goal in 85 international appearances.

He pumped his fists downward as he ran toward toward the corner flag. He first threw a fist in the air. Then he slid to

both knees and repeatedly pumped tightly-closed fists in raw emotion.

Was it a relief?

"Yeah," said Pulisic, who played just the first half. "I think you could see it my reaction."

U.S. coach Mauricio Pochettino had predicted last week that the drought would come to an end in the World Cup.

"The performance of Christian, for 45 minutes, was really, really good," Pochettino said. "He still has the potential to improve. But I think it is the way that he is training from day one. How way he played for 45 minutes was the habits that he created last week. Every day training with this attitude, with this commitment, with this energy. I think now we need to try to extend (it) until 90 minutes."

"I am happy for him also because after a long time, a few months, he scored again. Obviously, that is important for our players in the preparation to the World Cup."

Pulisic had a goal and assist in the same U.S. game for the eighth time. Only Landon Donovan with 13 has had more since 1995.

He was key to the first goal. Pepi took a pass from Antonee Robinson, spun between Iliman Ndiaye and Abdoulaye Seck and made an incisive pass that sent Pulisic streaking alone down the left flank. Pulisic took two touches and sent a cross just outside the 6-yard box for Sergiño Dest, who beat Diaw for third international goal.

Senegal captain Sadio Mané scored twice following American mistakes to tie the score 2-2, extending his Senegal record with 54 international goals. He took advantage of an Antonee Robinson giveaway to beat goalkeeper Matt Turner in the 44th and tapped the ball into the net in the 52nd after Nicolas Jackson had lifted it over onrushing goalkeeper Chris Brady.

Folarin Balogun scored the tiebreaking goal in the 63rd.

Special teams key in evenly matched Stanley Cup Final

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — The Stanley Cup Final between the Vegas Golden Knights and Carolina Hurricanes looks even in a lot of ways, with very little margin for error.

Vegas has won 12 of 16 games in the playoffs, including a sweep of Colorado in the West final, while Carolina has taken 12 of 13. They've allowed the third-fewest and fewest goals against, respectively, while each scoring more than three goals a game.

So what will make the difference in a series between NHL powerhouses? Look no further than special teams.

The Hurricanes' penalty kill is clicking along at a 92.5% success rate, allowing four goals and scoring once shorthanded.

"Carolina's been an elite penalty-killing team for years now and that's part of their identity and that comes from their puck pressure and their sticks, their discipline — all that kind of stuff," goaltender-turned-NHL Network analyst Cory Schneider said. "Vegas will have its work cut out for itself."

The Golden Knights have been elite themselves. They allowed six power-play goals through three rounds and scored four times short-handed.

Brayden McNabb, who has been around since the team's inaugural season in 2017-18, has been a key cog of that, logging more than 45 total minutes of ice time on the kill. Three other huge pieces are players GM Kelly McCrimmon brought in midseason.

Goaltender Carter Hart has stopped 64 of 70 shots while an opponent is on the power play. Defenseman Rasmus Andersson, acquired before the Olympic break, and center Nic Dowd, an addition on the eve of the trade deadline, have, along with McNabb, been among the first guys over the boards on the penalty kill.

It has been old reliable for the Hurricanes, with defensive defenseman Jaccob Slavin skating over 56 minutes short-handed. Coach Rod Brind'Amour's team plays with a particular structure all the time, and this is where it is most effective as long as the three or four guys on the ice in front of

goalie Frederik Andersen are on the same page.

Vegas' power play has scored 11 times in 46 opportunities, good for 24%. Captain Mark Stone and winger Pavel Dorofeyev have four apiece, while centers Jack Eichel and Tomas Hertl each have six power-play assists.

"I find the Vegas power play to be more threatening," Schneider said. "Can Carolina quiet Vegas' power play and force them 5 on 5 in order to beat them?"

The better question is can the Hurricanes' power play keep up? It is 7 of 56 in the playoffs, a 12.5% rate that has gotten the job done against Ottawa, Philadelphia and Montreal.

The Golden Knights, as Brind'Amour said, are "a different animal."

"Carolina's got a good power play, don't get me wrong, but I think that could be a bit of a wash and Carolina's going to have to try to generate more 5-on-5 offense than rely on their power play like Vegas should," Schneider said.

Soto hits grand slam as Mets sweep Marlins

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Juan Soto hit a grand slam, Carson Benge launched his first leadoff homer and the New York Mets routed the Miami Marlins 10-1 on Sunday to finish a three-game sweep.

Marcus Semien had a two-run homer and Luis Torrens laced a two-run single as New York matched a season high with its fourth consecutive victory. The Mets scored 25 runs in the series after totaling two last weekend while getting swept in three games at Miami, as they inched past the Marlins into fourth place in the NL East.

Benge, making his 22nd start atop the batting order, became the first Mets rookie to homer leading off a game since Kirk Nieuwenhuis against Tampa Bay on June 14, 2012.

Nolan McLean (3-4) allowed one run but walked a career-high five over five laborious innings. The rookie right-hander has a 9.00 ERA with nine walks in his last three starts after opening the season with a 2.92 ERA and 15 walks in his first nine outings.

Mariners 3, Diamondbacks 2 (10): Victor Robles' infield single scored Randy Arozarena in the 10th inning as host Seattle completed a three-game series sweep with a win over Arizona.

The Mariners have won a season-high six straight games and have three series sweeps this season. The Diamondbacks dropped their third straight after winning 10 of their previous 11 games and were swept in a series for the third time this year.

With runners on second and third, Robles hit a grounder up the middle against a drawn in infield and Arizona shortstop Geraldo Perdomo dove to make the stop but bobbled the ball, allowing Robles to reach safely and the winning run to score.

Yankees 13, Athletics 8: Ben Rice had two extra-base hits and four RBIs in a 13-run third

inning that was the biggest for New York in 21 years, carrying it over the host Athletics.

The Yankees got the first 12 batters on in the inning against A's pitchers Jacob Lopez (4-3) and Michael Kelly, marking the first time they pulled that off in nearly 77 years. It was New York's biggest inning since scoring 13 runs in the eighth against Toronto on June 21, 2005, and was one run off the franchise record set in 1920 against the Washington Senators.

Pirates 9, Twins 3: Braxton Ashcraft struck out 11 in six innings, Ryan O'Hearn and Nick Gonzales homered, and host Pittsburgh beat skidding Minnesota to complete a three-game sweep.

Ashcraft (5-2) allowed two runs and five hits with no walks, sending the Twins to their fifth straight defeat.

Orioles 9, Blue Jays 5: Kyle Bradish (3-6) pitched seven innings of four-hit ball with one unearned run, Colton Cowser homered and drove in four runs and host Baltimore beat Toronto.

Pete Alonso had two hits, scored twice and drove in a run for the Orioles, who mounted a 6-0 third-inning lead against rookie Spencer Miles (2-1) and coasted to the finish.

Nationals 4, Padres 2: James Wood and Luis García Jr. each homered, Zack Littell allowed two earned runs and host Washington beat San Diego in the rubber game of the series.

Littell (5-4) allowed three singles and a walk through the first six innings before running into trouble in the seventh. He gave up an RBI double to Ty France before being lifted for Orlando Ribalta, who allowed an inherited run to score on a sacrifice fly.

Red Sox 9, Guardians 4: Masataka Yoshida had the go-ahead single during a six-run seventh inning and visiting Boston rallied over Cleveland.

Cleveland starter Tanner Bibee (0-7) became the fourth opening day pitcher since 1901 to make at least 12 starts and not have a win before June 1 according to Sportradar.

Rays 5, Angels 2: Shane McClanahan pitched one-run ball for five innings, Jonathan Aranda homered and host Tampa Bay beat Los Angeles.

McClanahan (6-2) allowed four hits, struck out three and didn't issue a walk. Bryan Baker pitched a scoreless ninth for his career-high 16th save in 19 chances.

Reds 6, Braves 4: Eugenio Suárez homered for the first time since April 15 and Nick Lodolo allowed three earned runs in 6⅓ innings to lead host Cincinnati over first-place Atlanta.

Lodolo (2-1) allowed seven hits, including a pair of homers with four walks and four strikeouts. Ronald Acuña Jr. hit his franchise-best 39th career lead-off home run on Lodolo's first pitch to make it five homers in four games.

White Sox 2, Tigers 1: Colson Montgomery homered and Tristan Peters' RBI single put host Chicago ahead as the White Sox rallied with two runs in the seventh inning to beat slumping Detroit for its fifth straight win.

The Tigers lost for the 21st time in 25 games despite a terrific start by Keider Montero, who allowed just two hits in six shutout innings.

Brewers 2, Astros 0: Jacob Misiorowski (6-2) struck out eight in seven innings and Abner Uribe and Trevor Megill completed the three-hitter to lead visiting Milwaukee over Houston.

Jake Bauers provided the offense with a two-run homer in the fourth inning to help the Brewers to their fifth win in six games.

Rangers 6, Royals 3: Jack Leiter (3-4) struck out 10 in 5⅓ scoreless innings and Ezequiel Duran tripled home two in a four-run first as host Texas

earned its second series sweep this season with a victory over reeling Kansas City.

Josh Jung doubled with one out in the first against Michael Wacha (4-3), and Jake Burger drew a two-out walk. Duran hit a shot off the wall in left field that bounced away from Isaac Collins for a 2-0 lead. Alejandro Osuna added an RBI single before scoring on Kyle Higashio's double.

Giants 19, Rockies 6: Willy Adames hit a grand slam to cap a seven-run fifth inning, and visiting San Francisco avoided a series sweep with a win over Colorado.

Jung Hoo Lee had two of his career-high five hits in the fifth, when the Giants broke it open to end a six-game skid. Bryce Eldridge homered, doubled twice and singled, and Rafael Devers had three doubles, a single and scored four runs. Jesús Rodríguez also went deep for San Francisco, which set season highs for runs, hits (25) and extra-base hits (13).

Dodgers 9, Phillies 1: Yoshinobu Yamamoto (5-4) had a season-high 10 strikeouts in 5⅓ scoreless innings, Ryan Ward hit his first major league homer in his Dodger Stadium debut and Los Angeles defeated Philadelphia.

Alex Freeland homered and drove in two runs for the Dodgers. Max Muncy also went deep, Alex Call provided a two-run single and Freddie Freeman had two RBIs for LA, which has won 14 of 17 overall.

Cardinals 5, Cubs 1: Matthew Liberatore (3-3) took a shutout into the sixth inning and Maysn Winn hit a two-run single as host St. Louis beat Chicago.

JJ Wetherholt and Iván Herrera each had two hits and scored twice for the Cardinals, who took two of three from their NL Central rivals after entering the series on a four-game losing streak. Alec Burleson drove in two runs.