

## 4 convictions vacated in 'Fat Leonard' case

*The Washington Post*

The felony convictions of four former U.S. Navy officers were vacated Wednesday following what a judge described as “outrageous” misconduct by prosecutors — the latest turn in a massive corruption scandal centered on a defense contractor known as “Fat Leonard,” who swindled the military out of millions by offering officials booze, money and sex parties.

U.S. District Judge Janis Sammartino agreed to resolve the case with a plea agreement, under which the four defendants were each ordered to pay a \$100 fine and plead guilty to one misdemeanor charge. The former officers had been convicted by a federal jury in June 2022 of accepting bribes from international defense contractor Leonard Glenn Francis, who pleaded guilty in 2015 to offering Navy officials \$500,000 in cash bribes, among other bribery and fraud charges.

According to the attorneys defending the four men — former Capt. David Newland, James Dolan and David Lausman, and former Cmdr. Mario Herrera — the trial was riddled with problems. Michael L. Crowley, Herrera’s lawyer, said prosecutors relied on untrustworthy information provided by Francis — who last year escaped to Venezuela weeks before his sentencing date — and withheld information from the defense.

As a result, he said, the prosecutors prevented the four officers from getting a fair trial.

“It’s outrageous,” Crowley told *The Washington Post*. “These prosecutors wanted a conviction no matter what.”

The prosecutors involved in the case did not immediately respond to requests for comment from *The Post*. In a statement, the acting U.S. attorney for the Southern District of California, Andrew Haden, said his office does “not agree with all the allegations or characterizations in the motions or in court” but did not specify the allegations to which he was referring.

“We recognize and regret, however, that errors were made, and we have an obligation to ensure fairness and justice,” Haden said. “The resolutions of these defendants’ cases reflect that. It is also significant that the four officers who stood before the court today admitted for the first time, under oath, that they broke the law and are guilty of crimes related to their official duties.”

In early 2017, Newland, Dolan, Lausman and Herrera were charged with bribery and conspiracy to commit bribery — alleged crimes connected with a sprawling corruption scheme that lasted more than a decade and involved dozens of U.S. Navy personnel.

For years, Francis’s Singapore-based company, Glenn Defense Marine Asia, pro-

vided items and services that Navy submarines and ships need in port, including food, water, waste removal and fuel.

But investigators alleged that Francis’ company overcharged for its services and faked some invoices. Francis, investigators said, also bribed Navy personnel in the Asia-Pacific region in exchange for classified information about ship movements to win more military contracts — a move allegedly tied to a slew of perks.

Even though the Navy prohibits personnel from accepting gifts worth more than \$20 — and there’s a \$50 annual limit on accepting gifts from a single source — Francis bribed service members with \$1 million in Cuban cigars, lavish meals and parties with what prosecutors described as a “rotating carousel of prostitutes,” an investigation by *The Post* found.

After his scheme came crashing down in 2013, hundreds of active-duty and retired personnel — including about 60 admirals — were under scrutiny for possibly violating military laws or ethics rules as part of the probe, *The Post* reported. Most were later cleared of wrongdoing, but since then, more than 30 people — including Navy officers, enlisted sailors, contractors and Francis’ employees — have either been found guilty of or pleaded guilty to participating in the plot.

## Young adults to see higher Tricare costs next year

By JENNIFER H. SVAN

*Stars and Stripes*

Young adult military dependents enrolled in Tricare will see their health care costs rise starting next year, when monthly premiums go up by as much as 11.8%.

Tricare premiums are also going up Jan. 1 for reservists, retired reservists and separating service members and their families, according to new rates published Aug. 31.

Tricare Young Adult Prime for those between ages 21 and 26 will cost \$637 per month start-

ing in January, compared with the current \$570 a month. The premium has skyrocketed by more than 250% since 2014, when it was \$180 a month.

Tricare Young Adult Select, meanwhile, will jump from \$291 per month this year to \$311 in 2024, an increase of 6.9%. The Select package has deductibles and more out-of-pocket costs.

Tricare Young Adult plans are available for purchase by unmarried adult children of service members between the ages of 21 and 26 after they age out of other Tricare plans. Cov-

erage includes medical and pharmacy benefits but excludes dental and vision.

The program is part of Tricare’s premium-based plans, Peter Graves, a Defense Health Agency spokesman, said in a statement Wednesday. The premiums reflect costs to the Defense Department, which by law cannot subsidize the program, he said.

“Based on past actual costs of the program, DHA actuaries calculate the future cost of health care for these type plans, and premiums are established

based on these cost projections,” Graves said.

Higher usage and care costs for a health plan like Tricare Young Adult result in higher premiums, he said.

Young Adult Prime beneficiaries have access to care through their assigned military or civilian primary care manager.

All Tricare beneficiaries are eligible for care at military hospitals and clinics, but Tricare Young Adult Select beneficiaries have access only if space is available.

# Russia continues hit on Ukrainian grain

Associated Press

KOSTIANTYNIVKA, Ukraine — Victims of a deadly Russian missile attack that struck a busy market in eastern Ukraine were buried Thursday, as Moscow kept up its assault on Ukraine's grain export infrastructure, hitting a Ukrainian port for the fourth time in five days.

Wednesday's attack on the market in Kostiantynivka, in Ukraine's Donetsk region, killed 16 people and wounded 33 — another grim reminder of the war's civilian toll. Authorities initially put the death toll at 17, but the Interior Ministry revised that number on Thursday after examining the bodies.

Among the victims were Mykola and Natalia Shyrai, whose bodies were laid to rest in a village outside Kostiantynivka on Thursday. The married couple, in their 50s, had been selling flowers in the market when they were killed in the blast. Dozens of people from the small settlement arrived to say their final farewells as caskets covered in white cloth were shut and lowered.

The attack the previous day had turned an outdoor market into a fiery, blackened ruin, and overshadowed a two-day visit by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken aimed at assessing Ukraine's 3-month-old counter-offensive and signaling continued U.S. support for the fight.

While touring northern Ukraine on Thursday, Blinken said the death and destruction in Kostiantynivka was "what Ukrainians are living with every day."

Hours earlier, Russia attacked the Ukrainian port city of Izmail for the fourth time in five days, Ukrainian officials

said Thursday, in what has become a sustained campaign to target Ukraine's ability to export grain. The Danube River port area was attacked with Shahed drones aiming at civilian and port infrastructure, Odesa region Gov. Oleh Kiper said. A truck driver was wounded and grain silos were damaged, he said.

Ukrainian war crimes prosecutors inspected the wreckage at the scene close to port infrastructure Thursday, according to a statement from the Ukrainian Prosecutor's Office. The Ukrainian military said it shot down 25 out of 33 drones launched by Russia overnight, most of them at the Odesa region, Ukraine's agriculture export hub, as well as the northern Sumy region.

Russia has escalated attacks on Ukraine's grain export infrastructure since mid-July, when it exited a U.N.-backed deal that had allowed for the safe shipping of Ukrainian grain during the war.

The attack in Izmail came one day after the attack in Kostiantynivka. The area, just 10-to-12 miles from the front line, has been shelled by Russia several times, and the sounds of the not-so-distant war boom throughout the day. The tail of a rocket from a cluster munition was lodged in the middle of the road that leads to the cemetery where the funerals were held.

Blinken visited a Kyiv region facility of the State Border Guards of Ukraine and went to see a demining team working to clear unexploded ordnance from a 10-acre site that included a farm.

Blinken announced \$90.5 million in demining assistance as part of a package of U.S. aid.

# US Navy cruiser leaves Japan after 17-year stint

By ALEX WILSON

*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The guided-missile cruiser USS Shiloh steamed out of Tokyo Bay on Tuesday bound for Hawaii, concluding a 17-year stint with the U.S. 7th Fleet.

The Shiloh is headed to its new homeport at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, headquarters of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, according to a news release Thursday from 7th Fleet. The ship is relocating to Hawaii as part of a "planned rotation of forces in the Pacific."

"It's sad to be leaving this place that means so much to us, but we believe USS Shiloh made a difference during her time forward-deployed to Yokosuka, and we are proud of that," the ship's skipper, Capt. Adam Cheatham, said in the release. "On behalf of the crew, I want to

offer my deep gratitude to the people of Japan and this community for their friendship over the years. It will never be forgotten."

The guided-missile destroyer USS John Finn, which left Naval Base San Diego and arrived in Yokosuka on March 4, is the Shiloh's replacement, Task Force 70 spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Seth Koenig said.

"As a matter of operational security, it is U.S. Navy policy not to discuss specific dates regarding future ship movements," he said.

The Shiloh first arrived in Yokosuka in 2006, when it left San Diego and joined the assembly of warships under Task Force 70. The ship arrived to "fulfill the obligations of the U.S.-Japanese ballistic missile defense program" and support the 7th Fleet in the region, according to the news release.

# Army expects improved Abrams by early 2030s

By SETH ROBSON

*Stars and Stripes*

The Army has announced plans for an improved main battle tank it expects will be battle-field-ready by early next decade.

Designing and building the new model — the M1E3 Abrams — "will focus on making the capability improvements needed to fight and win against future threats on the battlefield of 2040 and beyond," according to an Army news release Wednesday.

"We appreciate that future battlefields pose new challenges to the tank as we study recent and ongoing conflicts," Brig. Gen. Geoffrey Norman, director of the Next-Generation Combat Vehicle Cross Func-

tional Team, said in the release. "We must optimize the Abrams' mobility and survivability to allow the tank to continue to close with and destroy the enemy as the apex predator on future battlefields."

The current model is powered by a jet turbine and burns through fuel at a rate of about two gallons per mile, meaning it requires a convoy of fuel trucks. While an Abrams can power through most challenging terrain, fuel trucks sometimes can't.

The Army and manufacturers are planning a more survivable, lighter tank that will be more effective on the battlefield and easier to upgrade, according to Wednesday's release.

# Suit seeks to bar Trump from Colo. primary

Associated Press

DENVER — A liberal group on Wednesday filed a lawsuit to bar former President Donald Trump from the primary ballot in Colorado, arguing he is ineligible to run for the White House again under a rarely used clause in the U.S. Constitution aimed at candidates who have supported an “insurrection.”

The lawsuit, citing the 14th Amendment, is likely the initial step in a legal challenge that seems destined for the U.S. Supreme Court. The complaint was filed on behalf of six Republican and unaffiliated Colorado voters by the group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

It will jolt an already unsettled 2024 primary campaign that features the leading Republican candidate facing four separate criminal cases.

Liberal groups have demanded that states’ top election officials bar Trump under the clause that prohibits those who “engaged in an insurrection or rebellion” against the Constitution from holding higher office. None has taken that step, looking for guidance from the courts on how to interpret a clause that has only been used a handful of times since the 1860s.

While a few fringe figures have filed thinly written lawsuits in a few states citing the clause, the litigation Wednesday was the first by an organization with significant legal resources. It may lead to similar challenges in other states, holding out the potential for conflicting rulings that would require the Supreme Court to settle.

The lawsuit contends the case is clear, given the attempt by

then-President Trump to overturn his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden and his support for the assault of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. The Republican has said he did nothing wrong in his actions.

The 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, helped ensure civil rights for freed slaves — and eventually for all people in the United States. But it also was used to prevent former Confederate officials from becoming members of Congress after the Civil War and taking over the government against which they had just rebelled.

The clause cited in the lawsuit allows Congress to lift the ban, which it did in 1872 as the political will to continue to bar former Confederates dwindled. The provision was almost never used after that.

CREW and law professors of

both parties contend the amendment is clear and is a qualification for president. But others note there is much unsettled about the provision and that a case involving this issue has not reached the justices in Washington.

A Trump spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the suit.

Georgia’s secretary of state, writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, warned that using the 14th Amendment in this way could take the country down a dark path.

“For a secretary of state to remove a candidate would only reinforce the grievances of those who see the system as rigged and corrupt,” said Republican Brad Raffensperger, who drew Trump’s ire when he refused to declare Trump as the winner of Georgia in 2020.

## Biden cancels remaining oil, gas leases in Arctic Refuge

Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska — In an aggressive move that angered Republicans, the Biden administration canceled the seven remaining oil and gas leases in Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge on Wednesday, overturning sales held in the Trump administration’s waning days, and proposed stronger protections against development on vast swaths of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

The Department of Interior’s scrapping of the leases comes after the Biden administration disappointed environmental groups earlier this year by approving the Willow oil project in the petroleum reserve, a massive project by ConocoPhillips Alaska that could produce up to 180,000 barrels of oil a day on Alaska’s petroleum-rich North Slope. Protections are proposed for more than 20,000 square miles of land in the reserve in the western Arctic.

Some critics who said the approval of Willow flew in the face of Biden’s pledges to address climate change lauded in Wednesday’s announcement. But they said more could be done. Litigation over the approval of the Willow project is pending.

The Biden administration also announced proposed rules aimed at providing stronger protections against new leasing and development in portions of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska that are designated as special areas for their wildlife, subsistence, scenic or other values. The proposal still must go through public comment. Willow lies within the reserve but was not expected to be affected by the proposed rules.

The refuge’s 1.5-million-acre coastal plain, which lies along the Beaufort Sea on Alaska’s northeastern edge, is seen as sacred by the Indigenous Gwich’in because it is where caribou they rely on migrate and come to give birth.

## Some 9/11 defendants’ plea moves shot down by Biden

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden has refused to approve some of the conditions that lawyers for the defendants in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks had sought in a possible plea bargain, ruling out a presidential guarantee that the five men would be spared solitary confinement and provided care for the trauma of their torture in CIA custody, a White House National Security Council official said Wednesday.

Biden’s refusal on the plea-bargain guarantees leaves it to military prosecutors and defense lawyers to try to hash out an agreement on a plea bargain. The terms under discussion would have the five Guantanamo detainees plead guilty and serve life sentences in exchange for being spared the death penalty.

Lawyers for the two sides have been exploring a negotiated resolution to the case for about 1½ years. They had been waiting for

about a year of that time to see if Biden would express opposition or support for some of the conditions that defense lawyers had been seeking.

Biden agreed with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin’s recommendation not to accept the proposed terms as a basis for plea negotiations, according to the National Security Council official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity. Biden was unsettled about accepting terms from those responsible for the attack, the official said.

The five defendants include Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, accused as the architect of the attacks. The al-Qaida plot killed nearly 3,000 people outright in New York, the Washington, D.C.-area and Pennsylvania. The attack also sparked U.S. military invasions of Afghanistan, which had hosted al-Qaida, and Iraq, which had no role in the plot.



# Judge: Texas must move floating barrier

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas must move a large floating barrier that Gov. Greg Abbott placed on the river between the U.S. and Mexico this summer as part of the Republican's escalating attempts to stop migrants from crossing America's southern border, a federal judge ruled Wednesday.

U.S. District Judge David Ezra stopped short of ordering Texas to dismantle the wrecking-ball sized buoys on the Rio Grande, but called them a threat to safety and relationships between the neighboring

countries. His preliminary injunction instructs Texas, for now, to move the barrier out of the water and onto the riverbank by Sept. 15.

Ezra also cast doubt on Texas' rationale for the barrier, writing that the state produced no "credible evidence that the buoy barrier as installed has significantly curtailed illegal immigration."

The lawsuit was brought by the Justice Department in a rare instance of President Joe Biden's administration going to court to challenge Texas' border policies.

Texas officials said they would appeal.

"Today's court decision merely prolongs President Biden's willful refusal to acknowledge that Texas is rightfully stepping up to do the job that he should have been doing all along," Abbott said.

Abbott invoked "invasion" powers to deploy aggressive new tactics starting last year. Texas' use of dozens of bright orange buoys to create a barrier longer than a soccer field on a stretch of river where migrants often try crossing from Mexico is just one piece of his multibil-

lion-dollar border mission known as Operation Lone Star. The state has also installed razor-wire fencing along the river and allowed troopers to arrest migrants on trespassing charges, among other things.

Ezra, an appointee of former President Ronald Reagan, rejected Abbott's justification for all of Texas' actions.

"Under this logic, once Texas decides, in its sole discretion, that it has been invaded, it is subject to no oversight of its 'chosen means of waging war,'" Ezra wrote. "Such a claim is breathtaking."

## Late summer heat disrupting return to classrooms

Associated Press

A blast of late summer heat caused disruptions Wednesday for schools from Michigan to Virginia, with some districts dismissing students early and others holding classes online just days into the new academic year.

While temperatures weren't as high as last month's triple-digit deadly heat wave, schools in states including Michigan, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey cited inadequate air conditioning in cutting days short. One Massachusetts district canceled two days of classes because of hot classrooms. Temperatures in the mid-90s also led to online learning in Pittsburgh and Baltimore.

Only 20% of public schools in Detroit, where the temperature reached 89 degrees Tuesday but dropped Wednesday, have air

conditioning. The district dismissed its roughly 54,000 students three hours early Wednesday for the second consecutive day.

"We never want to inconvenience our families with early releases, but we also do not want our staff and students to be so uncomfortable that teaching and learning becomes a distraction to the heat," Detroit Public Schools Community District spokeswoman Chrystal Wilson said in a statement.

The early dismissals caused headaches for families who had to scramble to make last-minute schedule changes.

Parent Natesha Myers, who works from home, opted to keep her 5-year-old daughter with her. Myers said she would not have been able to pick up her daughter from her Detroit school three hours early because of scheduled work meetings.

"It was very difficult and stressful,"

Myers said. "I had to give her the iPad. She kept trying to climb on my lap."

Late summer heat isn't unusual. But temperatures at the start of the school year have been getting warmer for years.

For instance, Philadelphia's forecasted high of 95 on Wednesday is 13 degrees higher than the normal high for the day, according to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration data.

The first week of school in Philadelphia this week saw early dismissals for dozens of schools "without air conditioning or inadequate cooling." The district announced Wednesday that more than 80 schools would end classes early the rest of the week.

Nationwide, an estimated 36,000 schools need to update or install HVAC systems, according to a U.S. Government Accountability Office report in 2020.

## US jobless claims fall to lowest level since February

Associated Press

The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits last week fell to the lowest level in seven months with the labor market seemingly resistant to the higher interest rates put in place to cool hiring.

U.S. applications for jobless claims fell by 13,000 to 216,000 for the week ending Sept. 2, the Labor Department reported

Thursday. That's the lowest level since February.

Jobless claim applications are seen as representative of the number of layoffs in a given week.

The Federal Reserve, well into the second year of its battle against inflation, has raised interest rates 11 times to 5.4%, the highest level in 22 years.

The Fed's rate hikes are in-

tended to cool the job market and bring down wages, which many economists believe suppresses price growth. Though some measures of inflation have come down significantly — from as much as 9% down closer to 3% — since the Fed started raising interest rates, the job market has held up better than many expected.

Last week, the government

reported that U.S. employers added 187,000 jobs in August, another sign of a healthy labor market. The unemployment rate ticked up to 3.8%, though still low by historical measures.

The U.S. economy has been adding an average of about 236,000 jobs per month this year, down from the pandemic surge of the previous two years, but still a strong number.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

**Lawyers: Other utilities also responsible in fires**

**H** HONOLULU — After a visit to a warehouse where Hawaiian Electric Co. is housing power poles and electrical equipment that may be key to the investigation of last month's devastating fires on Maui, lawyers for Lahaina residents and business owners told a court Tuesday that cable TV and telephone companies share responsibility for the disaster because they allegedly overloaded and destabilized some of the poles.

The lawyers said the cables were attached in a way that put too much tension on the poles, causing them to lean and break in the winds on Aug. 8 when flames burned down much of Lahaina, killing at least 115 people and destroying more than 2,000 structures.

LippSmith LLP has filed a proposed class action lawsuit against Hawaii's electric utility and Maui County in state court in Hawaii. Attorney Graham LippSmith is now asking the court to add multiple telecommunications companies and public and private landowners to the original suit.

Hawaiian Electric acknowledged last week that its power lines started a fire on the morning of Aug. 8, but faulted county firefighters for declaring the blaze contained and then leaving the scene, only to have a second wildfire break out nearby.

**Schools to use COVID-19 aid for tutoring program**

**AZ** PHOENIX — Arizona is channeling \$40 million in federal COVID-19 relief funding toward tutoring

students falling behind in school, the state superintendent said Tuesday.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne announced at a news conference that free tutoring will be available for students who failed to pass proficiency tests in reading, writing and math.

The tutoring program, however, will be given on a first-come, first-served basis. Only students between first and eighth grades at public and charter schools will be eligible.

The funding will cover over one million hours of tutoring for four days a week over a six-week period. Either a certified teacher or a private vendor approved by the state would do the tutoring, according to Horne.

**Design approved for '17 mass shooting memorial**

**NV** LAS VEGAS — The permanent memorial to the victims and survivors of the 2017 country music festival mass shooting will feature 58 candle-like beams under a plan officials in Las Vegas approved Tuesday.

With the design officially in place, Clark County commissioners will shift their focus to selecting a nonprofit that will oversee fundraising and the construction and maintenance of the project. It took years to get to this point and could take years more before the memorial is unveiled at the site of the attack on the Las Vegas Strip.

The commissioners voted unanimously to proceed with the design recommended by the 1 October Memorial Committee, which was formed in 2019 to develop a design concept. The committee, which was dis-

solved Tuesday after commissioners voted, included a survivor and the sister of one of the 60 people who were killed in the October 2017 shooting.

The number 58 in the final design represents the initial toll of people who were killed when a gunman opened fire from a 32nd-floor suite at the Mandalay Bay hotel on a country music festival crowd below.

**Retired trooper killed after car rolls over him**

**MS** JACKSON — A retired Mississippi Highway Patrol trooper was crushed by a vehicle and killed Monday after stopping to help people involved in a crash.

Mike Griffin, the retired trooper, came across a two-vehicle crash on a north Mississippi highway, according to the state Department of Public Safety. A pickup truck traveling west had collided with a sedan going in the same direction.

After the crash, 62-year-old Griffin of Ripley, Miss., stopped to check on the sedan's driver when the car rolled on top of him. He was later found by other officers and pronounced dead at the scene.

The episode remains under investigation by the Mississippi Highway Patrol.

**Man convicted of robbing women he met online**

**AL** BIRMINGHAM — An Alabama man accused of sexually abusing and robbing women he met on websites was convicted Tuesday on a dozen criminal charges including rape, robbery, sexual torture and theft.

Birmingham news outlets say Jonathan Lockett, 43, was con-

victed by a jury after seven hours of deliberations.

Jefferson County prosecutors Isabella Colombo and Julie McMakin said Lockett preyed on women who were down on their luck and who had turned to prostitution.

Lockett, who testified in his own defense, said the encounters were consensual.

Lockett was tried for crimes that took place from October 2019 through November 2020, involving five victims.

**Cat found 26 days after home falls into river**

**AK** ANCHORAGE — A pair of Alaska teachers needed good news after they lost nearly all their possessions when their house collapsed into a river swollen by a glacial-outburst flood and their cat went missing.

Elizabeth Wilkins was holding onto hope that if any animal would survive the house falling into the Mendenhall River on Aug. 5, it would be Leo, the couple's resilient black-and-white cat who shows no fear of bears.

"I knew that he's pretty smart, and so I felt pretty confident that he would escape and be OK somewhere," she said.

That faith paid off 26 days after the flood when Tonya Mead posted a photo of Leo to the Juneau Community Collective Facebook page. Wilkins immediately knew it was Leo, the "COVID kitten" they rescued in 2020. She rushed to meet Mead.

"I just started walking down the street calling for him, and he just ran out and was like, 'Oh hey, here I am, you know, like, where have you been?'" she said.

— From wire reports

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# No. 11 Texas collides with No. 3 'Bama

*Associated Press*

Texas gained credibility. Alabama showed vulnerability.

But that was last year's game between the two traditional football powers and soon-to-be Southeastern Conference opponents. The 11th-ranked Longhorns and No. 3 Crimson Tide meet again Saturday night in Tuscaloosa sporting high rankings and even higher ambitions.

"It just presents a new challenge for us to see who we are as a program and test our culture," Texas center Jake Majors said. "I think it's going to be a really good game."

The last one sure was, if not exactly a thing of beauty.

A penalty-plagued Alabama won last year in Austin 20-19 on Will Reichard's field goal with 10 seconds left, vaulting the Longhorns into the Top 25 even in defeat. The preseason No. 1 Tide, meanwhile, were anything but dominant and wound up losing two similarly close games.

Alabama under Nick Saban is used to big games, having won a record 100 games against ranked teams.

Tide players aren't exactly contributing to the hype leading up to a game that is

bringing ESPN's GameDay to town, and that's the way Saban & Co. like it.

"Ultimately, like I would say it's just another game," Alabama cornerback Terrion Arnold said. "Obviously we're keeping our poise. We have a great matchup in Texas. They're a very great team. It's going to be a great atmosphere but that's why you come to Alabama."

"Every game is the same. No one is above anybody so we're going to treat it just like another game."

It might be just another SEC game once the Longhorns and Oklahoma start playing in the league next season.

For now, it's a matchup of two tradition-rich programs that have only met 10 times so far, with Texas winning seven but losing the last two, including the 2009 national championship game. The Longhorns have won four AP national titles. Saban has led Alabama to six since taking over in 2007.

But Steve Sarkisian, the Longhorns coach and Saban's former offensive coordinator, knows they have to beat only one Alabama team at a time. Not all of them at once.

"We can't get caught up thinking we're going to go play all 17 teams coach Saban

has had over the years," Sarkisian said. "We're playing the 2023 Alabama football team which is very good, very well coached. It's going to be a great environment for college football."

As Saban said multiple times on Monday, it's a chance to answer the question: "Where are we as a team?"

Easy wins against Rice (Texas) and Middle Tennessee State (Alabama) were good ways to start, but not much in the way of measuring sticks.

This one should be much better in that regard.

A year ago, Alabama committed 15 penalties, a problem that proved costly in losses to Tennessee (17 penalties) and LSU (92 yards in flags).

"I remember it being hot, cleats were melting," Alabama's Arnold said of last year's game in Austin. "The atmosphere, the fans, they did a really great job of kind of making the atmosphere very shaky. We had a lot of penalties on defense."

"We have to do a better job of making practice tougher on ourselves. Ultimately it was a very difficult atmosphere so we need our fans to come in and make a difficult atmosphere for them, too."

## Medvedev wins, warns of excessive heat of US Open

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — Soaked with sweat as the temperature neared 95 degrees on the hottest day at this year's U.S. Open, 2021 champion Daniil Medvedev walked slowly to towel off between points of his victory Wednesday, looked into a courtside camera and issued what sounded like a mix between a warning and a plea.

"You cannot imagine," he said. "One player (is) gonna die, and they're gonna see."

"The only thing that is a little bit, let's call it dangerous, is that the question is: How far could we go?" Medvedev, a 27-year-old Russian seeded No. 3, said after eliminating Andrey Rublev 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 to reach the semifinals at Flushing Meadows for the fourth time.

"I'm not sure what can we do. Because probably we cannot stop the tournament for four days — because it's been, what, three, four days it's been brutal like this? — because then it basically ruins everything: the TV, even the tickets, everything. It ru-

ins everything," said Medvedev, who said he needed an ice bath and something to eat after leaving the court. "So I don't think this could be done."

An AP analysis shows that it is feeling hotter and hotter at Grand Slam tournaments in recent decades, reflecting the climate change seen in heat waves around the globe this summer. Week 2 at the U.S. Open is pushing players to the limit.

They're using ice — so much ice, in plastic bags or wrapped in towels — and courtside tubes blowing cold air to try to stay cool.

Medvedev used an inhaler during a second-set changeover Wednesday while being looked at by a doctor, who checked his breathing with a stethoscope. Rublev leaned back on his sideline chair as if he would rather be anywhere else.

"At the end of the first set, I couldn't see the ball anymore," Medvedev said, adding that he looked across the net at No. 8 seed Rublev — his countryman, good pal and godfather to his daughter — and thought:

"Wow. It seems like he cannot run anymore."

Medvedev will get back on court on Friday for his semifinal against defending champion Carlos Alcaraz, a 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 winner over 2020 U.S. Open runner-up Alexander Zverev on Wednesday night.

Under a new rule adopted on Tuesday for the rest of the event, the retractable Ashe roof was partially closed to provide some additional protection from the sun for spectators and competitors.

One unintended result: The shadows can make it hard to see the tennis balls as they zip through the air.

Zheng Qinwen, the No. 23 seed who defeated 2022 runner-up Ons Jabeur in her previous match, said that dynamic bothered her during a 6-1, 6-4 loss to Aryna Sabalenka.

Sabalenka will meet 2017 U.S. Open finalist Madison Keys, an American who saved all nine break points she faced during a 6-1, 6-4 victory over reigning Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova.



# Cowboys will test Giants' secondary depth

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — The way rookie cornerbacks Deonte Banks and Tre Hawkins have fit so seamlessly into the New York Giants defense, veteran Adoree Jackson has found himself playing a relatively new position.

New York's top coverage cornerback last season, Jackson has been playing more against the slot receiver since training camp opened in late July.

With the season opener against Dallas coming on Sunday night, Jackson may very well be paired against Cowboys top wideout CeeDee Lamb in the nationally televised game.

It's not the way many envisioned the Giants cornerback rotation this spring. Jackson was the best defensive back on the team in 2022 and New York felt it had found a starter to play opposite him when it drafted Banks out of Maryland in the first round.

Two days later, the Giants took Hawkins in the sixth round out of Old Dominion. It seemed like a selection to add depth to the roster.

It wasn't. Hawkins made an impression from the start and he has not stopped.

"I had seen him with the threes and the twos, but when he did it with the ones (starters), I don't want to say it rung my radar, but it was one of those things where you knew he was about his business," Jackson said of Hawkins.

Hawkins will likely play a lot this season. Combined with Banks living up to expectations, it has allowed defensive coordinator Wink Martindale to experiment with Jackson in the slot.

"I feel good," Jackson said of playing in the slot Monday. "Doing it, being able to go out there, practice and compete."

Darnay Holmes and second-year cornerback Cor'Dale Flott

also have helped him make the adjustment, along with watching a lot of film.

While Lamb has the talent to line up anywhere on the field, he makes a lot of plays out of the slot with quarterback Dak Prescott.

"Just exceptional talent and I think when you have a quarterback and receiver that are on the same page, you can look at numerous duos and they are their favorite target and give them the ball, a lot of things can happen," Jackson said.

Coach Brian Daboll said the Giants used Jackson in a lot of positions last season in the secondary, both inside and outside.

"We'll try to use him the best way we can," Daboll said. "Again, they have a very good player that plays both inside and outside with CeeDee, but they have some other skill players that are going to be challenging — really their entire package. All their skill guys

from their backs, to their receivers, to their tight ends. All of our guys are going to have to be ready to go with the assignments that we ask them to do."

In the first meeting between the teams last season, Lamb made a remarkable one-handed catch in the corner of the end zone against Jackson to break a 13-all tie in the fourth quarter en route to a 23-16 win in the third week of the season.

Jackson, who will be a free agent after this upcoming season, recalls going to the bench after the play and talking with secondary coach Jerome Henderson, wondering what he could have done better.

"It was one of those where the quarterback (Cooper Rush) put it where he needed to put it," Jackson said. He (Lamb) stuck his left hand out there and caught it one-handed. So it was one of those things where you don't really harp too much on it."

## AFN to offer NFL coverage for service members overseas

By JENNIFER H. SVAN

*Stars and Stripes*

When the NFL kicked off its season Thursday with the defending Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs taking on the NFC North division favorite Detroit Lions, overseas U.S. personnel were able to tune in live on American Forces Network.

AFN is offering full coverage of the 2023-24 regular season and the postseason via its television and mobile streaming services in Europe and the Pacific.

With support from the league and network partners, AFN plans to show an average of 12 to 15 NFL games per week, some live and some tape delayed, said Zoe Stagg, AFN chief of television programming.

But AFN's NFL lineup is far from set, Stagg said. The network's sports programmers make their picks for the week every Tuesday, reviewing the previous week's results and even ticket sales to see which games are in demand, she said.

"It's really anybody's game (early in the season), so your chances of seeing the greatest variety of teams are there," Stagg said.

"As we move through the season, then they're really doing that complicated sports math where they're pulling the very best matchups based on how the stats are working out for the season."

Typically, about two to four games in each NFL week aren't shown, depending on what other sporting events are happening, she said. This weekend, for instance, AFN will bypass a few games to make space for the U.S. Open tennis finals and college football.

AFN broadcast Thursday's season opener in Kansas City, Mo., live and through video on demand on the AFN Now mobile app. Other Week 1 matchups on AFN include the Tampa Bay Buccaneers at the Minnesota Vikings and the Cincinnati Bengals at the Cleveland Browns, both on Sunday.

"NFL games are among our most highly watched programs, and it is a privilege to work with the NFL to bring the excitement to our military audiences worldwide," Hal Pittman, director of the Defense Media Activity, said in a statement Tuesday.

The 18-week, 272-game regular season concludes Jan. 7, 2024. AFN will provide live

coverage of playoff games and the Super Bowl.

The network also has plans to air about 15 college football games per week this season. Nearly all sports aired on AFN television are available on the AFN Now app, said Kimberly Antos, chief of digital platforms.

"We are simulcasting nearly 24 hours a day throughout the week," she said.

Viewers who miss live games can catch them through video on demand about 12 hours after they air; they remain up for about a week, Antos said.

The app is free to download on Google and Apple devices, Amazon Fire, Roku and select smart TVs with app functionality.

It's available to overseas U.S. service members, families, military retirees and Defense Department civilians, and it has about 30,000 subscribers, Antos said.

Users can register for the app at <https://afn-now.myafn.mil/>. The AFN Now help desk is manned around the clock and can be reached at [DMA.AFNnow.Help@mail.mil](mailto:DMA.AFNnow.Help@mail.mil).

For a full listing of all NFL games airing on AFN, go to <https://myafn.dodmedia.osd.mil/>.

# Astros slug way back atop AL West

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — The Houston Astros made quite a powerful statement while slugging themselves back to the top of the AL West.

By going deep 16 times while sweeping the Texas Rangers on the road, the Astros set a franchise record for the most homers in any three-game span. They also matched a major league record with at least five homers in three consecutive games. And most importantly for the reigning World Series champions, they have sole possession of the division lead for the first time all season.

"I don't look back too much on memorable series, but this was a big one for us, especially the magnitude of it ... and what it meant to win this series," manager Dusty Baker said.

Houston outscored the Rangers 39-10 in the series that wrapped up with a 12-3 win on

Wednesday night, when José Abreu hit a grand slam and a three-run homer. The Astros' 10th slam of the season put them up 7-1 in the third against three-time Cy Young Award winner Max Scherzer, who was done after that inning.

"If there's one person that gets impressed by what this team can do, it's me because I'm new here," said Abreu, the 36-year-old first baseman who played the past nine seasons for the Chicago White Sox before his \$58.5 million, three-year deal with Houston. "I think that this organization, these guys, when the lights are shining bright, they know how to handle things, they know how to do things well. I'm just very grateful to be part of this as well."

With 21 games left in the regular season, and a day off Thursday, Houston (80-61) has a one-game division lead over Seattle and a three-game edge over

Lone Star State rival Texas. The Astros have won the AL West five of the last six seasons, made it to the AL Championship six consecutive times and been to four World Series in that span, winning two of them.

But they had never had a slug-ging series like the one they just finished against the Rangers.

Eight Houston players went deep in the series, with five of them hitting multiple homers. Before striking out to start the finale and going 0-for-4, Jose Altuve had five homers in the first two games. The Astros' leadoff hitter homered in each of the first three innings Tuesday night in the Astros' 14-1 win.

That was after Altuve also homered in the ninth inning of their 13-6 win in the series opener on Labor Day, meaning he hit long balls in four consecutive innings played.

Both of Altuve's homers Monday came right after Mauricio

Dubón went deep, marking the first time in major league history that a team's No. 9 batter and leadoff hitter twice went back-to-back in the same game.

They went back-to-back from bottom-to-top again Tuesday when Martin Maldonado was batting ninth, and his first homer came right before Altuve went deep for the third time. The Astros also had consecutive homers in the finale, when Abreu's three-run shot in the ninth inning to match his career high with seven RBIs came right before Chas McCormick went deep.

"You kind of like being where we are. The guys were ready. We jumped them early and got in their tired bullpen," Baker said after the finale. "I've seen Scherzer a lot better. He left some pitches up on the zone, some breaking balls, and our guys didn't miss them."

They hit them out of the park.

## Germany awaits US in Basketball World Cup semis

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — This seemed so far away in the beginning. There was a week of training camp in Las Vegas for USA Basketball to get through, then a week in Spain, then a week in Abu Dhabi, the group stage of the World Cup, then the second round, then the quarterfinals. They've flown 14,000 miles, eaten more than 100 meals away from home, played 11 games, posed for countless photos.

All for this. The medal round at the Basketball World Cup is here.

The U.S. plays Germany on Friday night in the World Cup semifinals, with a berth in Sunday's gold-medal game awaiting the winner. It's a rematch of an exhibition from three weeks ago, when the U.S. rallied from 16 points down to win 99-91. Germany hasn't lost since and is

the only team still unbeaten in this tournament.

"Everything that we've done in preparation for the last five and a half weeks has been to get to this point," U.S. coach Steve Kerr said. "It's not like we're all of a sudden going to give them a Knute Rockne speech, even though none of them know who Knute Rockne was. But that speech wouldn't work anyway. Show them what we need to do, let them be themselves, that's the plan."

So, no fire-and-brimstone speech like the ones the old Notre Dame football coach remains famous for are coming. None should be needed, not with this summer's ultimate goal — the World Cup title — so close, and with the knowledge that Germany will come into this game truly believing it can win.

For good reason, too. Germa-

ny was better for long stretches of that exhibition game, then came unglued down the stretch. Anthony Edwards had 34 points, the U.S. pulled away with an 18-0 run, and that was barely enough to get the win.

"We're ready to get it done," Edwards said before practice Thursday. "We're ready to try to get it done."

Nobody in the red, white and blue seems to be expecting a cakewalk.

The last four World Cup (or world championship, as it used to be called) winners have gone through the tournament undefeated: Spain in 2006, the U.S. in 2010 and 2014, Spain again in 2019. Germany is the only unbeaten team left in this tournament, now just two wins from what would be the biggest prize in its basketball history.

The U.S. is 6-0 in major inter-

national tournaments against Germany, with 25.5 points the average margin of victory.

### Canada vs. Serbia

No Jamal Murray for Canada this summer, no Nikola Jokic for Serbia either. Their national teams did just fine without the stars of the NBA champion Denver Nuggets.

The first semifinal on Friday has Canada, seeking its first trip to the gold-medal game, against a Serbia team trying to make its second trip to the finals in the last three World Cups.

Canada's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander is averaging 25 points per game in the World Cup, by far the most of any player on a team in the medal round. Serbia leads all World Cup teams in field goal percentage (55%) and is giving up the third-fewest points per game.