



The Pentagon is seen from Air Force One as it flies over Washington, March 2, 2022.

Associated Press
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Reported sex assaults in the U.S. military have dropped. That reverses what had been a growing problem

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of reported sexual assaults across the military decreased last year, and a confidential survey found a 19% drop in the number of service members who said they had experienced some type of unwanted sexual contact, according to new figures obtained

by The Associated Press. Both are dramatic reversals of what has been a growing problem in recent years. More than 29,000 active-duty service members said in the survey that they had unwanted sexual contact during the previous year, compared with nearly 36,000 in the 2021 survey, according to several defense officials. The decrease is the first in eight years.

At the same time, 8,515 sexual assaults were reported last year involving members of the U.S. military, a decrease from 8,942 in 2022. And officials said the U.S. military academies also saw fewer reported sexual assaults in the school year that ended last spring versus the previous year.

President Joe Biden hailed the improved numbers as he spoke Wednes-

day to his military commanders, who were gathered at the White House. "I'm proud that for the first time in nearly a decade, rates of sexual assault and harassment are, within the active-duty forces, are down. They're down. That's because of your leadership," Biden said.

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Reported sex assaults in the U.S. military have dropped. That reverses what had been a growing problem



President Joe Biden speaks at the beginning of his meeting with the Combatant Commanders in the Cabinet Room of the White House in Washington, Wednesday, May 15, 2024, before hosting them for a dinner.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

Senior defense officials said the assault numbers are still far too high and there is much more work to do, but they expressed cautious optimism that the military could be turning a corner, with help from an array of new programs and increased personnel. Sexual assault reports in the military have gone up for much of the last decade, except for a tiny decrease in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because the report has not been publicly released. While it's difficult to point to any one reason for the recent decreases, the Defense Department has been making a series of changes over the past year that officials say may be contributing to the shift. The services are using an infusion of more than \$1 billion in the last two budgets to improve programs and hire up to 2,500 personnel as part of a new "prevention workforce" and place them at military installations around the world. So far, more than

1,000 have been hired. The Pentagon releases a report every year on the number of sexual assaults reported by or about troops. But because sexual assault is a highly underreported crime, the department does a confidential survey every two years to get a clearer picture of the problem. The data for the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30 also suggests that a greater percentage of service members came forward to report sexual assaults, which has been a key goal for the Defense Department. About 25% of those who said on the survey that they had faced unwanted sexual contact reported it last year, compared with 20% in 2021, according to defense officials and documents reviewed by the AP. Defense officials have long argued that an increase in reported assaults is a positive trend because so many people are reluctant to report them, both in the military and in society as a whole. Greater reporting, they say, shows there is more confidence in the reporting system and

greater comfort with the support for victims, and results in a growing number of offenders being held accountable. But the Pentagon and the military services also have come under persistent criticism and pressure from members of Congress to reduce sexual assaults and harassment in the military. Service leaders and lawmakers have all argued that the sexual assaults and harassment contribute to the military's struggles to meet recruiting goals. Alarmed members of Congress have enacted a number of changes, including a new prosecution system that uses independent lawyers. Lawmakers argued that some commanders failed to take victims' complaints seriously or tried to protect those in their units who faced accusations, making victims reluctant to come forward. The services have long worked to develop programs to prevent sexual assaults, encourage reporting and bolster confidence in the system. The Army, for example, has a new training program for soldiers when they report to

their first duty station that shows service members acting out dangerous situations and teaches troops how to respond. The number of reported sexual assaults decreased across all the military services, which is a marked improvement over the 2022 fiscal year, when the number of sexual assaults in the Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps all shot up significantly. A 9% drop in Army reports in 2022 offset the increases in the other branches so that there was an uptick of about 1% for the whole military. The Army is the largest military service. According to officials, the number of sexual assault reported in the Army decreased from 3,718 in 2022 to 3,507 last year, while the Navy went from 2,052 to 1,942 and the Air Force from 1,928 to 1,838. The Marine Corps had the smallest decline, going from 1,244 to 1,228. Included in the 8,515 total were 541 service members who reported an assault that occurred before they entered the military and 612 civilians who said they were assaulted

by a member of the military. At the military academies, the number of assaults dipped from 155 in 2022 to 124 in the 2023 school year. Service commanders are still working, however, to address what was a dramatic spike in 2022. The latest survey also showed that nearly a quarter of all active-duty women said they'd faced sexual harassment, a decrease from the 28.6% in 2021. One troubling area continues to be female service members' satisfaction with the help they get when they make a complaint and their overall trust in the system and their leaders. While a large percentage of victims seek out sexual assault response staff, fewer than 70% are happy with the services they get. And that hasn't changed much over the past several years. Roughly the same percentage says they trust the military to respect and protect them and their privacy. Officials said the hiring of more permanent, full-time workers will help improve that process. □



A container of Narcan, a brand name version of the opioid overdose-reversal drug naloxone, sits on a table following a demonstration at the Health and Human Services Humphrey Building on Friday, Sept. 8, 2023, in Washington.

Associated Press

Fewer U.S. overdose deaths were reported last year, but experts are still cautious

By MIKE STOBBE
AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The number of U.S. fatal overdoses fell last year, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data posted Wednesday.

Agency officials noted the data is provisional and could change after more analysis, but that they still expect a drop when the final counts are in. It would be only the second annual decline since the current national drug death epidemic began more than three decades ago. Experts reacted cautiously. One described the decline as relatively small, and said it should be thought more as part of a leveling off than a decrease. Another noted that the last time a decline occurred — in 2018 — drug deaths shot up in the years that followed.

"Any decline is encouraging," said Brandon Marshall, a Brown University researcher who studies overdose trends. "But I think it's certainly premature to celebrate or to draw any large-scale conclusions about where we may be headed long-term with this crisis."

It's also too soon to know what spurred the decline, Marshall and other experts said. Explanations could include shifts in the drug supply, expansion of overdose prevention and addiction treatment, and

the grim possibility that the epidemic has killed so many that now there are basically fewer people to kill.

CDC Chief Medical Officer Dr. Deb Houry called the dip "heartening news" and praised efforts to reduce the tally, but she noted "there are still families and friends losing their loved ones to drug overdoses at staggering numbers." About 107,500 people died of overdoses in the U.S. last year, including both American citizens and non-citizens who were in the country at the time they died, the CDC estimated. That's down 3% from 2022, when there were an estimated 111,000 such deaths, the agency said.

The drug overdose epidemic, which has killed more than 1 million people since 1999, has had many ripple effects. For example, a study published last week in *JAMA Psychiatry* estimated that more than 321,000 U.S. children lost a parent to a fatal drug overdose from 2011 to 2021.

"These children need support," and are at a higher risk of mental health and drug use disorders themselves, said Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, which helped lead the study. "It's not just a loss of a person. It's also the implications that loss has for the family left behind."

Prescription painkillers once drove the nation's overdose

epidemic, but they were supplanted years ago by heroin and more recently by illegal fentanyl. The dangerously powerful opioid was developed to treat intense pain from ailments like cancer but has increasingly been mixed with other drugs in the illicit drug supply.

For years, fentanyl was frequently injected, but increasingly it's being smoked or mixed into counterfeit pills. A study published last week found that law enforcement seizures of pills containing fentanyl are rising dramatically, jumping from 44 million in 2022 to more than 115 million last year.

It's possible that the seizures indicate that the overall supply of fentanyl-laced pills is growing fast, not necessarily that police are whittling down the illicit drug supply, said one of the paper's authors, Dr. Daniel Ciccarone of the University of California, San Francisco.

He noted that the decline in overdoses was not uniform. All but two of the states in the eastern half of the U.S. saw declines, but most western states saw increases. Alaska, Washington, and Oregon each saw 27% increases.

The reason? Many eastern states have been dealing with fentanyl for about a decade, while it's reached western states more recently, Ciccarone said. □



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Barge hits bridge connecting Galveston and Pelican Island, causing partial collapse and oil spill

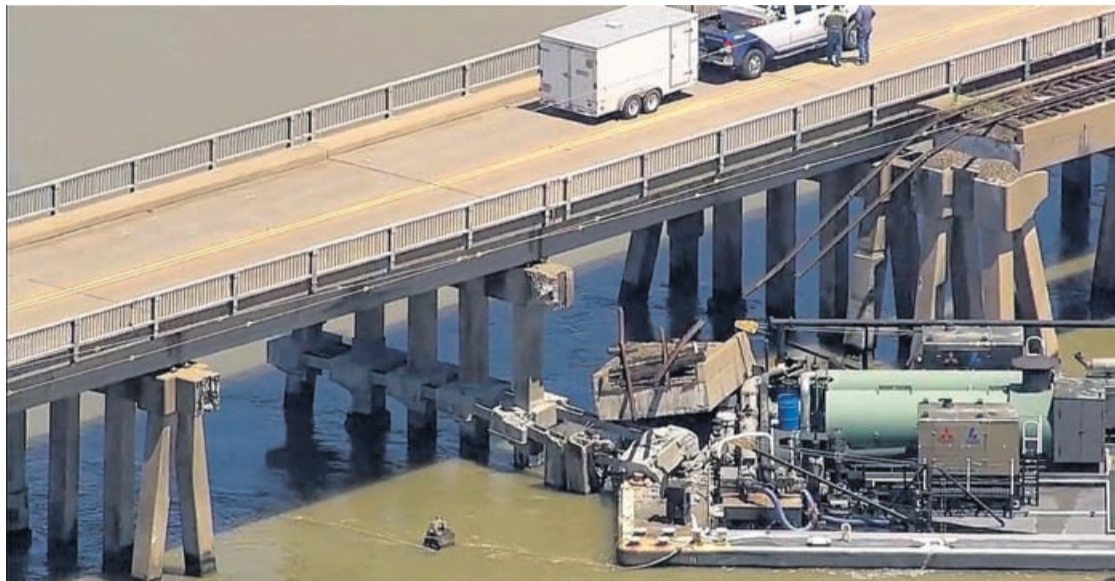
By **LEKAN OYEKANMI** and **JUAN LOZANO**

Associated Press

GALVESTON, Texas (AP) — A barge slammed into a bridge pillar in Galveston, Texas, on Wednesday, spilling oil into surrounding waters and closing the only road to a smaller and separate island that is home to a university, officials said. There were no immediate reports of injuries, although officials said one person on the barge was knocked into the water and quickly rescued.

The bridge that leads to Pelican Island, north of Galveston, was struck by the barge around 9:50 a.m. when a tugboat backing out of Texas International Terminals, a fuel storage operator next to the bridge, lost control of two barges it was pushing, said David Flores, a bridge superintendent with the Galveston County Navigation District. "The current was very bad, and the tide was high. He lost it," Flores said.

One of the barges hit the bridge and two telephone poles, he said. The accident came weeks after a cargo ship crashed into a support column of the Francis Key Bridge in Baltimore on March 26, killing six construction workers. The accident Wednesday knocked one man off the



Oil spills into the surrounding waters after a barge hit a bridge in Galveston, Texas, on Wednesday, May 15, 2024.

Associated Press

vessel and into the water, but he was quickly recovered and was not injured, said Galveston County Sheriff's Office Maj. Ray Nolen.

The tugboat was pushing bunker barges, which are fuel barges for ships, Flores said. The accident resulted in oil spilling from the barge into the channel off Galveston Bay and crews were working to clean it up, he said. The barge, which is owned by Martin Petroleum, has a 30,000-gallon capacity, but it's not clear how much leaked into the bay, said Galveston County spokesperson Spencer Lewis. He said about 6.5 miles (10.5 ki-

lometers) of the waterway were shut down because of the spill.

Galveston County Judge Mark Henry said the temporary closure of the waterway should not have a significant impact on water commerce in the area.

"This area is somewhat isolated," Henry told KTRK. "It's not part of the Intracoastal Waterway and it's not part of the Houston Ship Channel. They have other options around this area."

Pelican Island, which is connected to Galveston by the bridge, is home to a large shipyard, Texas A&M University of Galveston, and Sea-

wolf Park, a former immigration station that now attracts tourists to its iconic fishing pier and decommissioned U.S. Navy vessels. There are currently about 180 students, faculty and staff on the university's campus, a spokesperson said.

Fire trucks drove over the bridge as workers and law enforcement officials looked at the remnants of the collapsed rail line. Aerial footage showed a large piece of broken concrete and debris from the railroad hanging off the side of the bridge and laying on the barge that officials said rammed into the passageway.

Flores said the rail line only serves as protection for the structure and has never been used. A statement posted on the City of Galveston's Facebook page said there were no reports of injuries and that the island is currently inaccessible to car traffic.

"Engineers from the Texas Department of Transportation are also enroute to inspect the roadway and determine if there is damage," the statement said. "The bridge will remain closed until it is deemed safe to use."

Transportation officials were allowing vehicles to exit Pelican Island on Wednesday afternoon, but the bridge remained closed to all other vehicular traffic.

Texas A&M directed all non-essential employees at its Galveston campus to leave as soon as possible and said it plans to remain closed until at least Friday. Students who live on campus were allowed to remain there, but university officials warned those who live on campus and leave "should be prepared to remain off campus for an unknown period of time."

Opened in 1960, the Pelican Island Causeway Bridge was rated as "Poor" according to the Federal Highway Administration's 2023 National Bridge Inventory released last June. □

Pro-Palestinian protesters place fake bloody corpses at home of University of Michigan official



This photo provided by Sarah Hubbard shows pro-Palestinian protesters in Okemos, Mich., demonstrating outside the home of Sarah Hubbard, the chair of the University of Michigan's governing board, on Wednesday, May 15, 2024.

Associated Press

By **ED WHITE**
Associated Press

Pro-Palestinian protesters wearing masks pitched tents and placed fake bloody corpses outside the home of a University of Michigan board member Wednesday, raising tension with the school. Sarah Hubbard, chair of the university's governing board, said the 6 a.m. demonstration at her home in Okemos involved 30 people. "They approached my home and taped a letter to my front door and proceeded to erect the tents. A variety of other things were left in the front yard," Hubbard told

She and her husband stayed inside. Okemos is 60 miles (100 kilometers) from the Ann Arbor campus.

The protesters left 30 to 45 minutes later when Meridian Township police arrived, Hubbard said. No arrests were made. Three tents and fake corpses wrapped in red-stained sheets were left behind.

Jordan Acker, another member of the Board of Regents, said someone with a face covering left a list of demands at his home at 4:40 a.m. Protesters at the Ann Arbor campus have an encampment on the Diag, a

prominent public space. The group is demanding that the university's endowment stop investing in companies with ties to Israel. But the university insists it has no direct investments and only less than \$15 million placed with funds that might include companies in Israel. That's less than 0.1% of the total endowment.

"There's nothing to talk about. That issue is settled," Hubbard said. In social media posts, a coalition calling for divestment acknowledged the protest and said it would "remain relentless in the struggle for a free Palestine." □

Top U.S. and Chinese officials begin talks on AI in Geneva

By JAMEY KEATEN

Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Top envoys from the U.S. and China huddled in closed-door talks in Geneva on Tuesday to discuss ways to ensure that emerging artificial intelligence technologies don't become existential risks.

The talks, which Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping agreed to launch in last 2023, are meant to open up bilateral dialogue between the world's two biggest economies — and increasingly, geopolitical rivals — on a fast-moving technology that already has consequences for trade, lifestyles, culture, politics, national security and defense and much more.

U.S. technology experts say the meeting — led on the American side by high-level White House and State Department officials — could offer a glimpse into Beijing's thinking about AI amid a generally tight-lipped Chinese approach to the technology.

Co-founder Jason Glassberg of Casaba Security in Redmond, Washington, an expert on new and emerging threats posed by AI, handicapped the meeting as a get-to-know-you that will likely yield few concrete results, but get the two sides talking.



A pumper truck sprays fire retardant on trees around the evacuated neighborhood of Beacon Hill in Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada on Wednesday, May 15, 2024.

"What's most important right now is that both sides realize they each have a lot to lose if AI becomes weaponized or abused," Glassberg said in an e-mail. "All parties involved are equally at risk. Right now, one of the biggest areas of risk is with deepfakes, particularly for use in disinformation campaigns."

"This is just as big of a risk for the PRC as it is for the U.S. government," he added, referring to the People's Republic of China.

"It's vitally important that the

United States and China begin frank discussions about how to improve AI safety," said Paul Scharre, an AI expert at the Center for New American Security think tank. "The stakes are high and the consequences for AI-related accidents could be severe." He noted that the United States pledged in 2022 to always maintain a human in the loop for nuclear weapons use. But China's military has not done the same.

"Ensuring strict human control over nuclear weapons

seems a low bar to clear for agreement on military AI," said Scharre, author of "Four Battlegrounds: Power in the Age of Artificial Intelligence." "As the world's leading economic, military, and technological powers, agreement between the United States and China on how to manage AI risks could help set the stage for other nations to follow suit."

It was not immediately clear why the meeting was taking place in Geneva, though the internationally-minded

Swiss city bills itself as a hub of diplomacy and U.N. and international institutions.

The Geneva-based International Telecommunications Union — a U.N. agency currently headed by American Doreen Bogdan-Martin and previously run by China's Houlin Zhao — is set to host its annual "AI for Good" conference in the city later this month.

The meeting is the first under an intergovernmental dialogue on AI agreed upon during a multi-faceted meeting between Xi and Biden in San Francisco six months ago.

The U.S. government has sought to set some guardrails around the technology while fostering its growth, seeking a possible boon for economic output and jobs.

Western experts have suggested that China's government, meanwhile, has in part kept a lid on AI applications because of its real or potential applications for military and surveillance activities under the ruling Communist Party.

U.S. officials suggested they would lay out ways to mitigate possible risks from the technology by creating voluntary commitments with the sector's leading companies and requiring safety tests of AI products. □

Associated Press

Canadians are hopeful shifting winds may push wildfire away from the oil sands hub of Fort McMurray

EDMONTON, Alberta (AP)

— Favorable winds are expected to push an "out of control" wildfire away from Canada's oil sands hub of Fort McMurray, Alberta, officials said Wednesday, a day after thousands were evacuated.

Wildfire season has started early in Canada this year with several fires burning across the country's west, forcing residents out of their homes.

The fire, which started last week, caused about 6,600 residents to flee parts of the southern end of Fort McMurray. The rest of the

city remains on evacuation alert.

Earlier Wednesday, Regional Fire Chief Jody Butz told reports in Fort McMurray that "a large number of residents" also self-evacuated, adding that they could return home "if they live in those areas that are not under an (evacuation) order." Butz also said; "The fire is still out of control and in the next few days with the graces of some good weather that could change," and that evacuation orders were likely to remain in place until at least May 21 and residents should plan

accordingly.

Now, shifting winds are giving locals hope their city may be spared.

Christine Tucker, Alberta's Wildfire Information Unit Manager, said — during a press conference in the city of Edmonton together with the province's premier, Danielle Smith — that winds from the northwest at 10 kilometers (6 miles) an hour are expected to push the fire away "from the community and away from the highway."

She added "lower winds" have been recorded, adding they are "really favor-



A pumper truck sprays fire retardant on trees around the evacuated neighborhood of Beacon Hill in Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada on Wednesday, May 15, 2024.

Associated Press

able ... for us."

Tucker also described the wildfire, which has so far grown to cover about 21,000 hectares (2.4 acres), as "out of control," but said cooler temperatures will also mean slightly less wild-

fire activity.

Fort McMurray, which has a population of about 68,000, suffered a devastating blaze in 2016 that destroyed 2,400 homes and forced more than 80,000 people to flee. □



Gambia's defeated leader Yahya Jammeh waves to supporters as he departs from Banjul airport on Jan. 21, 2017, as he has decided to relinquish power.

Associated Press

A Swiss court sentences a former Gambian interior minister to 20 years for crimes against humanity

By JAMEY KEATEN and ABDOULIE JOHN
Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Switzerland's top criminal court on Wednesday convicted a former interior minister of Gambia for crimes against humanity and sentenced him to 20 years over his role in murder, torture and other repression committed by the West African country's security forces under its longtime dictator.

Prosecutors had sought a life sentence for Ousman Sonko, Gambia's interior minister from 2006 to 2016 under then-President Yahya Jammeh. But legal rights groups, led by TRIAL International, which helped bring the case, hailed what they called a landmark decision involving a former government official for crimes against humanity, saying it could set a precedent for international justice. "In its judgement of 15 May 2024, the criminal chamber finds Ousman Sonko guilty of multiple counts of intentional homicide, multiple counts of torture and false imprisonment, each as a crime against humanity," the court in the southern city of Bellinzona said in a statement.

It cited repression of political opponents, journalists and suspected coup plotters under Jammeh's 22-year rule.

Human Rights Watch trumpeted a "monumental" verdict, calling it "a major achievement for Switzerland's efforts to hold accountable those responsible for grave crimes committed abroad."

The Swiss Attorney General's office said it was "satisfied" with the ruling, touting a "milestone in international criminal law" and an important decision for victims in Gambia. Defense lawyer Philippe Currat said Sonko, 55, planned to appeal the ruling to the criminal chamber's appeals court.

In a phone interview, Currat said the alleged wrongdoing didn't rise to the level of crimes

against humanity, and that a direct connection to his client and the crimes was not established. He said the court should have provided more English translation for Sonko, who does not speak German — the language of the proceedings — and that failing to do so violated the rules of a fair trial. "In what I heard today, the court was not able to specify Sonko's individual role in the acts described, that it was a case of collective responsibility: Because he was minister, he was necessarily responsible for everything," Currat said. "That in the end, he gets convicted because somebody has to be convicted, and there's no one else at hand — so he's the one to do the trick." "That's a real problem," he added.

Currat also argued that Swiss law — which was revised in 2011 when it comes to crimes against humanity — could not fairly be applied to acts before that date.

The two-month trial was welcomed by advocacy groups as a watershed application of the principle of "universal jurisdiction," which allows for the prosecution of serious crimes committed abroad.

However, the court deemed that the crimes committed by Sonko did not rise to "aggravated" cases that could have brought the maximum penalty of life behind bars, according to several lawyers who attended the trial.

Sonko, who was in the courtroom for Wednesday's verdict, offered little reaction when a translation was read out in English, said TRIAL International's legal adviser Benoit Meystre, who also attended the proceedings.

Activists and legal experts say the verdict could send a message to Jammeh, who fled Gambia — an English-speaking West African country surrounded by neighboring Senegal — and remains in exile in Equatorial Guinea. □



Migrants heading north ride arrive to Lajas Blancas, Darien province, Panama, Oct. 6, 2023, after walking across the Darien Gap from Colombia.

Associated Press

Child migration through Panama's dangerous Darien Gap is up 40%, UN report says

PANAMA CITY (AP) — Child migration through Panama's dangerous Darien Gap is up 40% so far this year, according to a report released Wednesday by the U.N. children's agency.

UNICEF said an estimated 30,000 children under age 18 have crossed the jungle-clad trail between Colombia and Panama, and some have died making the trip. The report says a total of 139,000 migrants of all ages have made the crossing in the same period.

"Many children have died on this dangerous and arduous trip," said Ted Chaiban, deputy executive director of UNICEF. "Given that children make up one-fifth of those making this journey, UNICEF's presence and help is more important than ever."

Last year, more than 500,000 people crossed the treacherous migratory highway, many traveling from Venezuela and other Latin American, African and Asian countries. From there, migrants wind up going through Central America and Mexico and land on the U.S. Mexico border, where authorities came across migrants 2.5 million times in 2023.

UNICEF predicted that, at the current rate, as many as 800,000 migrants and 160,000 minors could make the crossing by the end of the year.

The agency says more funding is needed to care of the underage migrants. Many of the migrants making the crossing are Venezuelan, Haitian, Ecuadoran and Chinese.

President-elect José Raúl Mulino vowed earlier this month to shut down the migration route. Until now, Panama has helped speedily bus the migrants across its territory so they can continue their journey north.

The migrant route through the narrow isthmus grew exponentially in popularity in recent years with the help of organized crime in Colombia, making it an affordable, if dangerous, land route for hundreds of thousands. □

Aruba is going to celebrate the 4th Multicultural Encounter in San Nicolas

Once again this year, San Nicolas will be the epicenter of art and culture in Aruba, where on Sunday, May 19th, it will start with a gastronomic fair and multicultural show, and on May 21st, there will be a Peace and Unity parade.

This encounter is related to the "World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development" declared by UNESCO, the Ministry of Culture of Aruba together with the Department of Culture of Aruba, the Consular Corps, UNESCO Aruba, Artisa, and artistic groups, Cultural Folklore established in Aruba from different countries such as Colombia, the Netherlands, India, Italy, Jamaica, Peru, the Philippines, Santo Domingo, Suriname, Venezuela, and others besides Aruba, will bring their unique presentations.

This project, created in 2021, aims to create bonds



of unity, generate integration, and share with each other the greatest richness of Aruba, which is our multiculturalism. In the past, it has already been celebrated for 15 consecutive years under the name of 'Multicultural Fair', which took place on October 12th, which is 'Co-

lumbus Day'. Moreover, it is a platform where every country has the opportunity to celebrate its culture in a spirit of gratitude and meet each other in unity and harmony contributing to the peace and unity of all the peoples of the world. Likewise, it is to create a

peaceful coexistence environment, where respect, tolerance, and freedom of artistic and cultural expression are highlighted, to then continue promoting this, presented in combination with a multidisciplinary cultural exchange show, a gastronomic and craft exhibition,

creating a space where artists of all genres can demonstrate their talent and express to the present audience, all the artistic potential that exists in Aruba.

Through the "Aruba Multicultural Encounter", the Department of Culture of Aruba pushes to stimulate the people of Aruba to continue working, living, feeling, and preserving the cultural heritage, both material and non-material. Protect the cultural heritage and legacy of each nationality and thus create a space to share the cultural richness of all the people living in Aruba.

The central theme this year is: "Elevate the Aruban to the height of his culture and learn about others, the richness of our country is our multiculturalism." □

Photo courtesy of the Department of Culture's Facebook Page.

Lessons from our elders:

Plants and fruits for medicinal use (part 2)

(Oranjestad)—In last week's edition, we shared with our readers some medicinal use for plants and fruits, passed down from our elders through generations. This week, we present two more uses of fruits and plants for medicinal use.

Sweet potato



According to our elders, sweet potato is mostly useful for low blood pressure. People who suffer from low blood pressure were advised to eat sweet potato 2 to 3 times a week. However, if you have high blood pressure, it is best not to eat too much sweet potato, as this raises blood pressure. Sweet potatoes are also great for people who work hard labor jobs, and it's been said to be aid blood circulation in the body, as well as help those with hemorrhoids or diarrhea.

Many of our elders opted to plant sweet potatoes themselves, mostly because of how easy it was to do so. Cut the end of a sweet potato let it sit in shallow water until it starts to sprout. Then you may plant it in the ground. Sweet potatoes need plenty of water to grow, especially in the first week in the ground. It was said that once you start to notice the ground crack underneath the flowers, it is time to harvest. This should happen around month 3.



Pomegranate

Pomegranates are also one of the easier fruits to plant and harvest. Originated from Persia, this plant can grow almost everywhere. In Aruba, there are many homes that have a tiny or big pomegranate tree. You may be wondering what the difference is between a small and big pomegranate tree, for which the answer is based on harvest time. Tiny trees produce tinier pomegranates that can be harvested early on. Contrarily, big trees produce bigger pomegranates, but they need enough time to fully ripen before harvesting, otherwise you might end up with bitter seeds. Pomegranate trees are also very easy to plant. In essence, if you just throw the seeds on the ground, they could grow into a tree.

In terms of medicinal use, pomegranate skins are said to have a few benefits for our health. According to customs, pomegranate skin tea can help those that suffer from diarrhea. Dried pomegranate skin tea is also good for people who have worms. Pomegranate flowers can be boiled to make a drink and this can be used for irritated gums; just take a swig and let the tea sit in your mouth for a couple minutes. □

Source: Remedi i Kustumber di nos Bieunan (Medicine and Customs of our Elders) by Dinah Veeris

Aruba's Nature is to be Cherished

ST. CRUZ — The national park Arikok comprises almost 18 % of the island. Its rugged terrain, desert-like hills filled with tall cacti, breathtaking coastline and protected local flora and fauna welcome you to be explored. There is numerous wildlife to discover like for example the sea turtle who lays his eggs on the park's beaches. There are more places on the island that are a preserved area like the Bubali Plas which is a bird sanctuary.

The national park Arikok takes you on a memorable journey of the islands past



offering unique geological, cultural and historical sites. These can all be enjoyed and explored either on your own or during guided tours. A wide variety of educational and informative programs and fun activities is available. Did you know that four of the in total seven species of sea turtle lay their eggs on Aruba's beaches? In the national park, a Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) keeps a strict eye on a very special event taking place below on the beach: a majestic Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) heads back to sea after laying her eggs, while

another nest laid 2 months ago by the same female hatches. A very rare occurrence of daytime nesting and hatching. Sea turtles prefer nesting in the cool and dark hours of the night. And hatchlings usually wait for the cue of cooling surface sand before emerging.

Bubali Magic

This beautiful close-up image of the pink bird is courtesy of Michiel Oversteegen of the Aruba Birdlife Conservation. This important foundation showcases and builds awareness of Aruba's birds and other native flora and fauna. You may have seen a 'pink cloud' lately at the Bubali or Spanish Lagoon Wetlands areas? It's most likely to be Roseate Spoonbills (*Ajaia ajaja*) or 'Chucharon Cora' as they are known in Papiamentu. This unusual looking bird forages in shallow muddy water while sweeping its flattened bill from side to side to catch small fish, crustaceans and other aquatic



invertebrates. The Roseate Spoonbill remains an uncommon sight as they are vulnerable to degradation of feeding and nesting habitats (Wetlands). (Source: arikok national park)

The aforementioned is just a part of what Aruba's nature has to offer. We cannot stress enough to go, see for yourself. The island has the most beautiful beaches but it is also worthwhile to go beyond this and get an idea of our entire island. Lately there is a discussion going on about the effect certain

activities have on our nature, for example the ATV vehicles cause a lot of dust, noise and leave tire tracks. Animals live in these areas where the vehicles run, often with high speed and with detrimental consequences to flora and fauna. Motorized vehicles are forbidden to drive on the sand dunes in the Northern part of the island and all beaches in Aruba are forbidden for any motorized vehicle. Treasure our island to enjoy it like you do: as a tropical and natural paradise. We truly appreciate it! □

Visit the natural bridges of Aruba!

(Oranjestad)—After you've visited the Alto Vista Church, the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and the mini natural pool that is located right next to it, you're next up around the northern coast line must be the Natural Bridge. Once the largest natural bridge in the Caribbean, this bridge has been a tourist attraction for many years.

The bridge was formed during thousands of years, cut and crafted by the wild waves that crash into the coral stone walls of the coast. Before its collapse, this bridge measured 30 meters in

length and 7 meters in height, making it the biggest natural bridge in the Caribbean at the time. For many years, this site was also a frequently visited beach, as the bridge had a small opening through which the water would flow into the tiny beach.

Unfortunately in 2005, the bridge collapsed, and the little beach dried up. Despite this, this site remained a tourist attraction, with many visitors walking along the coral cliffs of the bridge to see the spectacular view of the northern coastline and the Caribbean Sea. Visitors

can also still visit the souvenir shop on the left of the bridge entrance.

While the natural bridge no longer is functional, there is now a smaller natural bridge very close. This bridge is often called the "Baby Bridge" or "Daughter Bridge". □



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**In celebrating 200 years of Oranjestad...
 Learn about the history of the famous town hall!**

(Oranjestad)—If you've ever taken a stroll through main street Oranjestad, you may have stumbled upon a big green house with beautiful colonial design. This legendary house, now used as a town hall for civil marriages, was once owned by a wealthy doctor and formed part of the elite neighborhood in Oranjestad.



mansion for the first time, furnished entirely by her sisters-in-law.

The mansion also contained the doctor's office, as well as a pharmacy. After the death of Jacobo, the house was inherited by his son, an Aruban dentist, who converted Jacobo's office into his own dental practice. Over the years, the house was rented and used by third parties, but eventually fell into disrepair, as the maintenance cost became too high to cover.

Jacobo Eloy Arends was an Aruban physician, and in lived in Oranjestad during the 1920s. In 1922, he married Maria Monica Lacle, the daughter of well-known business man at the time, Adriaan Lacle. The two lived a posh life in the city center, and their mansion—once the center for neighborhood parties—now serves as a public town hall for civil marriages and is a cultural monument on the island.

by architect Chibi Wever, and constructed under the leadership of famous master carpenter, Dada Picus, who was famous at the time for his construction of beautiful buildings.

The construction of the house started once Jacobo and Maria got engaged. It is said that during the time of construction, Maria was not allowed to see the building nor be anywhere near the construction site. It wasn't until after her honeymoon that she saw the completed

The land was sold to Land Aruba in 1986, but it did not see a renovation until 1997. Nowadays, it serves to host weddings, and is attached to a modern building situated behind—the Aruban census office.

Jacobo and Maria's mansion was situated in front of another famous mansion, owned



by Jacobo's brother Frederico Maximiliaan (Machi) Arends. Frederico was married to Veneranda (whom the mansion was named after). Their house was also constructed by Dada Picus, utilizing Veneranda's design vision that was inspired by a house she saw in Cartagena, Colombia.

in ruins. However, the Aruban government recently announced its official restoration, with plans to convert this monument into a governmental office and public space for visitors of Oranjestad.

Source and pictures credited to: "De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over the geschiedenis van Aruba)" by Evert Bongers. □



Enjoy one of the best views on Aruba at the top of the Hooiberg Hill



(Oranjestad)—If you are a regular hiker, or maybe want to spice up your morning work out session, then you might enjoy one of the most popular climbing sites on the island: The Hooiberg Hill. Accompanied with a 600-step staircase, this hill overlooks a great part of the island, the Caribbean sea, and some-

times even the Santa Anna mountain located in the coastal state of Falcon in Venezuela, providing one of the best views you can get on Aruba.

located at the center district of the island, Santa Cruz, the Hooiberg Hill is the second highest point on the island at 165 meters



above sea level (or about 540 feet above sea level). The highest point is Jananota Hill at 189 meters (620 feet), located in the Arikok National Park. The staircase that runs on the side of the hill was first built in 1951, when Mr. Eduardo Tromp constructed it. At that time, the staircase consisted of 900 steps. Over time, as the steps faced erosion, the government decided to renovate these stairs in 1991. This new project delivered the

newer staircase with only 587 steps. However, don't be fooled—it may still be a work out to get on top. In addition, there is now a gazebo placed halfway up the stair for a little rest. The view at this resting stop is also a sight to see. The best time to climb the hill would be early in the morning or right before sunset, as it may not be as hot. However, the hill is of course open all day, every day. □



Ever heard of the cah'i orgel?

A key instrument in Aruban folklore music

(Oranjestad)—The cah'i orgel music box is an important and unique instrument that is used on the ABC islands in the Dutch Caribbean. This instrument is a staple in our folklore music, and its significance in the traditions of Aruba has and continues to bring together the old and young.

The origin of the cah'i orgel is said to have come from Europe around 150 years ago. A cross breed between the barrel piano and the organ, the most popular stories said that the instrument came from either England or Germany, but made its way to Italy down to Venezuela, where in 1881, Mr. Horatio Sprock (1866-1949) from Curacao was first introduced to it.

After that, Sprock made his own cah'i orgel "Josefina", and successfully debuted it on the streets of Barquisimeto. Back in Curacao, he started his own cah'i orgel business along with his brother Luis. In Aruba, it is said that the cah'i orgel was introduced by Rufo Wever, who later in his career became one of the composers for the Aruban national anthem.

Rufo Wever was a young musician in 1937 when he established his own cah'i orgel business on the island. Before that he experimented with his uncle's cah'i orgel, and he over the years he learned to build and repair the instrument. In fact, he was incredibly skilled in this, and he was one of the few to have

recognized from the start that the cah'i orgel is an instrument that needs preserving.

As mentioned, the cah'i orgel is a music box. made from mahogany wood, it contains a cylinder with a maximum of eight music pieces. By rotating the lever on the front side of the box, the cah'i orgel produces music similar to that of a piano, and is accompanied often by someone else playing the "wiri", a percussion instrument made out of steel and reminiscent to the Spanish guiro. Back then, you would often also find someone playing the triangle alongside the cah'i orgel and wiri. In Aruba, the cah'i orgel and wiri is used for traditional music genres, such as the Aruban waltz,



tumba, mazurka and more. □

Fun fact: another name for the cah'i orgel is the "tingilingi box."

Source: "E Cilinder Magico entre Aruba y Curaçao" by Marilyn Alcalá-Wallé, Herta Parabirsing-Balentina and Nidia Rosaria-Wallé.

Aruba to me

ORANJESTAD — You are back or still enjoying your vacation?... we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By

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Did you know about...?

The history and meaning of the Aruban florin

(Oranjestad)—Aruba Today is proud to officially introduce a new segment called Did you know about...?, where we dive into some (historical) facts of Aruba, its culture and way of living. In this first edition, we look back at the Aruban florin: its history, design and symbolism.

In Aruba, we know the 5, 10, 25 and 50 cent coins, along with the 1 and 5 Florin coin. Aruban Florin bills include the 10, 25, 50, 100, and rarely, the 200 bills. In Papiamentu we call our currency Florin, but the umbrella term for money is placa. Cents are called cen (pronounced: seng), both in the singular and plural form. Most coins are circular and their size depend on their worth. However, the 50 cent coin is easily recognizable by their square shape, as is the 5 Florin coin by their golden color. Every coin has the Aruban emblem carved on it, with the other side displaying the worth of the coin. The bigger 1 and 5 florin coins, however, contain the carving of the emblem on one side, while displaying the side profile of the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, on the other side. When his mother, Princess Beatrix, was reigning queen, it was her profile that was carved on the two coins.

Outdated Aruban coins and their names

In the past, Aruban coins had distinctive names and also varied in worth. For example, a 5-cent coin was once called Dos placa; 10-cent coins were called debchi; 25-cent coins were called diez placa and the 50-cent coin was once called Yotin (pronounced: jo-teen). We also used a distinctive coins worth 2 ½ cents, called placa too. However, this last coin is no longer in use and has become a relic of Aruban money. Back then, the 5-Florin coin used to also be square, but now it is circular.

Aruban bills: their design and symbolism

The Aruban Florin collection contains a variation of colorful bills, displaying incredibly detailed and beautiful designs that tell the story of Aruba on a single piece of paper.

Prior to 2019, the Aruban Florin bills were relatively simpler in design compared to now, but still included beautiful designs and colors, often depicting local animals. These past designs were made by the Aruban



artist Everino Fingal in 1990 up to 2019. Between 1990 and 1993, the 5 Florin coin was a bill. The Fingal designs also included a 500-Florin bill, which has now been discontinued.

In 2019, the Central Bank of Aruba commissioned a new design of the Aruba Florin bills, this time selecting artist and former art teacher, Nigel Matthew, to present his new design. Matthew kept the tradition of including local animals and the familiar colors on the bills. However, he included additional designs that represent the Aruban culture and link to the Indigenous inhabitants that were the first to set foot on the island.



Current design and symbolism 10 florin

On the 10-florin bill, you can see a Turtuga blanco (white turtle). The blue color symbolizes the blue Caribbean Sea. You can also see the ruins of the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins, a coral motif, and the symbols of Cas Floria (traditional Aruban house design) with a piece of mosaic.

25 florin

On this orange bill, you can see an Aruban medicinal plant called Shoshoro. The birds Trupiaal, Shoco, rock drawings, and the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic are also depicted. There is also

a Purun di ceramica (clay pot), in reference to the relics left behind by our indigenous ancestors.

50 florin

On this bill, we see the Cododo (blue lizard found on the ABC islands), Cangreu di tera (land crab), Willem III Tower, and again the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, as well as a beach plant called Banana di rif. The colors are pink/purple.

100 florin

This bill is green in color, representing nature. Here we see the Yuwana (Iguana), Aloe, Toteki (lizard), the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, and a dance group performing the Baile di cinta (folkloric dance with silk ribbons).

200 florin

There is another bill with a value of 200 dollars. The brown color symbolizes the earth of Aruba. Here we see the Dornasol and the Warawara—both local birds, along with the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, the Tuna cactus plant, and the Caha di orgel (folkloric instrument, used for many traditional songs).

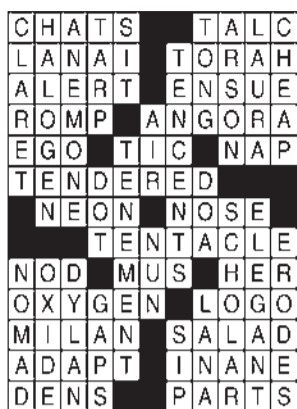
Extra fact:

the word "florin" supposedly is named after the Italian city of Florence or it's a reference to the Italian word "florino", both explanations related to historical Italian currencies. □

Source: Placa, placa, placa by the National Library of Aruba

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH



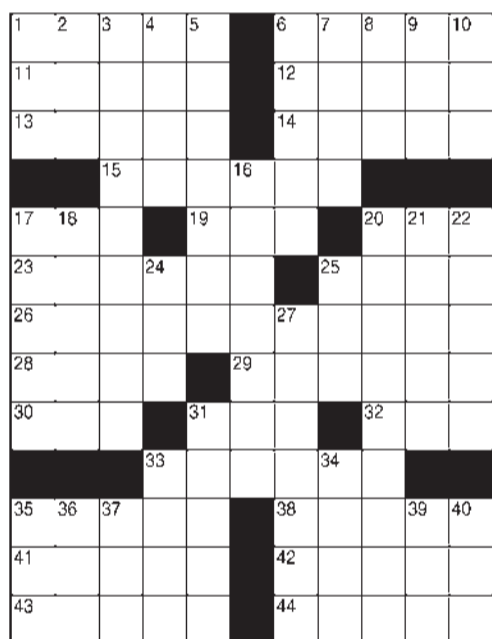
Yesterday's answer

ACROSS

- 1 Praline morsel
- 6 Diminished
- 11 Florida city
- 12 Ecuador's capital
- 13 Barn areas
- 14 City-based
- 15 Bothers
- 17 Tire track
- 19 Cobbler's tool
- 20 Scouting org.
- 23 Relaxed
- 25 Persia, today
- 26 Casual eatery
- 28 Goopy cheese
- 29 Bank fixtures
- 30 Pig-poke link
- 31 Fly catcher
- 32 Put down
- 33 Keep from practicing
- 35 Summer fruit
- 38 Skip the ceremony
- 41 Blow away
- 42 Perch
- 43 Prom rentals
- 44 Big trucks

DOWN

- 1 Campaign pro
- 2 Green prefix
- 3 Casual eatery
- 4 Utah ski resort
- 5 Tennis star Ilie
- 6 Match in value
- 7 Lancaster of film
- 8 Feeding time need
- 9 Greek vowel
- 10 Dress in
- 16 Turns abruptly
- 17 Bar mitzvah figure
- 18 Road reversal
- 20 Casual eatery
- 21 Dancer's boss
- 22 Nervous
- 24 Candle count
- 25 Debtor's letters
- 27 Yaks
- 31 Cellar stock
- 33 Take a nap
- 34 Balm ingredient
- 35 Yoga need
- 36 Running bird
- 37 Indulgent
- 39 Greek consonant
- 40 UFO pilots



5-16

A XYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-16

CRYPTOQUOTE

UNBKB RM X MRSVCB CRVNU DT
 MWRBSWB, XSG UD FKRNUBS
 RU XSZQNBKB RM UD FKRNUBS
 RU B PBKZQNBKB. — RMXW
 XMREDP

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: NATURE RESERVES SOME OF HER CHOICE REWARDS FOR DAYS WHEN HER MOOD MAY APPEAR TO BE SOMBER. — RACHEL CARSON

Cruise ship Schedule: May 01 - May 28 2024

TUE	07	CARNIVAL MAGIC	09.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	14	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00 08.00	21.00 22.00	B C	1 1
WED	15	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	09.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	21	CELEBRITY BEYOND CARNIVAL VISTA	08.00 13.00	21.00 23.00	B C	1 1
WED	22	CARNIVAL CELEBRATION	08.00	22.00	C	1
MON	27	ISLAND PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	28	CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	22.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic—but important—information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Supermarket hours



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Electrical power



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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What is the celebrity 'blockout' over the war in Gaza?

By DEEPTI HAJELA

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Some social media users are calling out celebrities for what they say is inaction in the face of a humanitarian crisis in Gaza — and they've taken to a "blockout" to pressure the stars to take a stand.

For the blockout, users put a block on seeing any and all content from the accounts of certain celebrities on social media platforms including X, TikTok and Instagram. Some have posted about the celebrities they've blocked, using a hashtag such as #blockout, #blockout2024, or #celebrityblockout, while others have shared posts from users lambasting attendees of high-glamour events like the Met Gala and contrasting it with the situation in Gaza.

Blockout participants say it's a protest because the celebrities either haven't spoken up or haven't said enough against Israel's actions in Gaza during its war with Hamas. Since the war erupted Oct. 7 with Hamas' deadly attacks, Israel's military has killed more than 35,000 people in Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants.

HOW DOES THE BLOCKOUT WORK?

On social media platforms, users see content from people they follow, as well as from those chosen for them by algorithms. In both instances, users can select options to mute or block a person or account.

Blocking the accounts of celebrities or influencers means not seeing any of the content they produce on social media — no posts, no photos or videos, no collaborations with sponsors. The number of people interacting with content brings in money, so the blocks are meant to affect views, engagement and — ultimately — paychecks.

The blockout also is meant to target celebrities' brands by taking eyeballs and attention away from their content.

WHO IS BEING BLOCKED?

There is no single organized list of celebrities being blocked. Some users are of-



Pro-Palestinian protesters march in between traffic near the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where the Met Gala takes place, Monday, May 6, 2024, in New York.

Associated Press

fering celebrity suggestions, while others are deciding on their own. Celebrities in the U.S. and beyond have been named in the blockout. Blocking is up to each social media user. And every celebrity, influencer or content creator must be blocked individually on each platform.

HOW DID THE BLOCKOUT START?

Protests around the Israel-Hamas war have grown, with encampments on college campuses around the country. Amid those movements, attention to what celebrities and influencers were, or weren't, saying got a boost after the Met Gala last week.

The annual party draws a host of famous faces from the worlds of fashion, movies, music, sports and more. It's known for its over-the-top arrivals carpet and the elaborate outfits celebrities

wear. This year, the gala was circled by protesters for much of the evening.

Social media was flooded with images from the star-studded event. Around the same time, images circulated as Israel launched a military operation in the southern Gaza city of Rafah. That led to some users calling out the contrast between the gala's celebrity opulence and the situation in Gaza — using images from both - and condemning celebrities for not using their platforms to speak up for those who are suffering.

WILL THE BLOCKOUT BE EFFECTIVE?

The effectiveness and staying power of the blockout are yet to be seen, said Beth Fossen, assistant professor of marketing at Indiana University. It might depend on the celebrity and what they're known for — a famous per-

son whose "brand" is tied to humanitarian causes may be more affected than one known primarily for talent, she added.

"If your identity is really tied to promoting something that is key to the boycotting, then this could potentially have really serious consequences for you," Fossen said. "There might be some influencers that gain their fame by sort of promoting peace and then they're being silent on this issue — followers may not forgive them."

IS THERE BLOCKOUT BACKLASH?

There has been criticism of the blockout, with some saying the focus on celebrities takes attention away from what's happening on the ground in Gaza. Others question what the parameters are for judging whether someone should be blocked — and what would constitute a well-known person speaking out or doing enough. □

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Google unleashes AI in search, raising hopes for better results and fears about less web traffic

By **MICHAEL LIEDTKE**
AP Technology Writer
MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif.

(AP) — Google on Tuesday rolled out a retooled search engine that will frequently favor responses crafted by artificial intelligence over website links, a shift promising to quicken the quest for information while also potentially disrupting the flow of money-making internet traffic.

The makeover announced at Google's annual developers conference will begin this week in the U.S. when hundreds of millions of people will start to periodically see conversational summaries generated by the company's AI technology at the top of the search engine's results page.

The AI overviews are supposed to only crop up when Google's technology determines they will be the quickest and most effective way to satisfy a user's curiosity — a solution mostly likely to happen with complex subjects or when people are brainstorming, or planning. People will likely still see Google's traditional website links and ads for simple searches for things like a store recommendation or weather forecasts.

Google began testing AI overviews with a small subset of selected users a year ago, but the company is now making it one of the staples in its search results in the U.S. before introducing the feature in other parts of the world. By the end of the year, Google expects the recurring AI overviews to be part of its search results for about 1 billion people. Besides infusing more AI into its dominant search engine, Google also used the packed conference held at a Mountain View, California, amphitheater near its headquarters to showcase advances in a technology that is reshaping business and society.

The next AI steps included more sophisticated analysis powered by Gemini — a technology unveiled five months ago — and smarter assistants, or "agents," in-



Demis Hassabis, CEO of DeepMind Technologies, left, shakes hands with Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai at a Google I/O event in Mountain View, Calif., Tuesday, May 14, 2024.

Associated Press

cluding a still-nascent version dubbed "Astra" that will be able to understand, explain and remember things it is shown through a smartphone's camera lens. Google underscored its commitment to AI by bringing in Demis Hassabis, the executive who oversees the technology, to appear on stage at its marquee conference for the first time.

The injection of more AI into Google's search engine marks one of the most dramatic changes that the company has made in its foundation since its inception in the late 1990s. It's a move that opens the door for more growth and innovation but also threatens to trigger a sea change in web surfing habits.

"This bold and responsible approach is fundamental to delivering on our mission and making AI more helpful for everyone," Google CEO Sundar Pichai told a group of reporters.

Well aware of how much attention is centered on the technology, Pichai ended a nearly two-hour succession of presentations by asking Google's Gemini model how many times AI had been mentioned. The count: 120, and then the tally edged up by one more when Pichai said, "AI,"

yet again.

The increased AI emphasis will bring new risks to an internet ecosystem that depends heavily on digital advertising as its financial lifeblood.

Google stands to suffer if the AI overviews undercuts ads tied to its search engine — a business that reeled in \$175 billion in revenue last year alone. And website publishers — ranging from major media outlets to entrepreneurs and startups that focus on more narrow subjects — will be hurt if the AI overviews are so informative that they result in fewer clicks on the website links that will still appear lower on the results page.

Based on habits that emerged during the past year's testing phase of Google's AI overviews, about 25% of the traffic could be negatively affected by the de-emphasis on website links, said Marc McCollum, chief innovation officer at Raptive, which helps about 5,000 website publishers make money from their content.

A decline in traffic of that magnitude could translate into billions of dollars in lost ad revenue, a devastating blow that would be delivered by a form of AI technology that culls information plucked from many of

the websites that stand to lose revenue.

"The relationship between Google and publishers has been pretty symbiotic, but enter AI, and what has essentially happened is the Big Tech companies have taken this creative content and used it to train their AI models," McCollum said. "We are now seeing that being used for their own commercial purposes in what is effectively a transfer of wealth from small, independent businesses to Big Tech."

But Google found the AI overviews resulted in people in conducting even more searches during the technology's testing "because they suddenly can ask questions that were too hard before," said Liz Reid, who oversees the company's search operations, told The Associated Press during an interview. She declined to provide any specific numbers about link-clicking volume during the tests of AI overviews.

"In reality, people do want to click to the web, even when they have an AI overview," Reid said. "They start with the AI overview and then they want to dig in deeper. We will continue to innovate on the AI overview and also on how do we send the most useful

traffic to the web."

The increasing use of AI technology to summarize information in chatbots such as Google's Gemini and OpenAI's ChatGPT during the past 18 months already has been raising legal questions about whether the companies behind the services are illegally pulling from copyrighted material to advance their services. It's an allegation at the heart of a high-profile lawsuit that The New York Times filed late last year against OpenAI and its biggest backer, Microsoft.

Google's AI overviews could provoke lawsuits too, especially if they siphon away traffic and ad sales from websites that believe the company is unfairly profiting from their content. But it's a risk that the company had to take as the technology advances and is used in rival services such as ChatGPT and upstart search engines such as Perplexity, said Jim Yu, executive chairman of BrightEdge, which helps websites rank higher in Google's search results.

"This is definitely the next chapter in search," Yu said. "It's almost like they are tuning three major variables at once: the search quality, the flow of traffic in the ecosystem and then the monetization of that traffic. There hasn't been a moment in search that is bigger than this for a long time."

Outside of the amphitheater, several dozen protesters chained themselves to each other and blocked one of the entrances to the conference. Demonstrators targeted a \$1.2 billion deal known as Project Nimbus that provides artificial intelligence technology to the Israeli government. They contend the system is being lethally deployed in the Gaza war — an allegation Google refutes. The demonstration didn't seem to affect the conferences attendance or the enthusiasm of the crowd inside the venue. □

Odell Beckham's rollercoaster career continues in Miami. He's ready for strong 'ending to the story'

By ALANIS THAMES
AP Sports Writer

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP)

— When Odell Beckham Jr. was asked by a friend a few years ago about the idea of joining the Miami Dolphins, he mildly shrugged off the notion at the time. But the veteran receiver entered this offseason and began talks with coach Mike McDaniels and the Dolphins about a possible union, and it didn't take much convincing this time. "Off the first meeting, I was just very excited about the opportunity," Beckham said Wednesday, speaking for the first time since joining the Dolphins. "I remember getting off the phone with my agent and being like, 'Yeah, this sounds good. Let's figure out a way to do it.'"

The Dolphins signed Beckham to a one-year deal earlier this month. McDaniels is the one who sold him, laying out the details of how he'll be used in Miami's high-flying offense.

"It kind of reminds me of a

place where I had a lot of success at as far as the Giants," Beckham said, "and timing and all of those things that (McDaniels) talks about and preaches. He was speaking football. We sat down for hours and just talked football." Beckham, who quickly rose to NFL stardom after being drafted by the New York Giants in 2014, understands that he's joining a loaded receiving group where he'll be quarterback Tua Tagovailoa's third option behind speedy wideouts Tyreek Hill and Jaylen Waddle.

He's just fine with that.

"At this place in my life and my career, I haven't been the No. 1 in a minute," Beckham said. "You can go look at targets. You can go look at anything. That's not really where I've been at."

It's a role that Beckham has learned to accept and appreciate during the twists and turns of his 10-year NFL career, one that began with one of the best rookie receiving seasons in NFL history but has waned

in recent years because of major injuries.

"I feel like I used to carry a lot of anger or resentment," Beckham said, "and now I just feel at peace. You're able to train. You're able to play the game that you love again."

Beckham was a 1,000-yard receiver five times in his first six NFL seasons but has not reached that mark since 2019 with the Cleveland Browns. Since then, he's had two ACL injuries, one of which sidelined him the entire 2022 season.

Beckham, a three-time Pro Bowl selection and 2014 AP Offensive Rookie of the Year, said it's hard for him to not internalize the effect injuries have had on his career. He added that he's always out to prove something. Whatever that may be at this point in his career remains to be seen.

He's coming off a 565-yard season with 35 catches with the Ravens, who had a dominant 2023 season but fell short of Super Bowl expectations when they lost



Odell Beckham Jr. speaks during an NFL football news conference, Wednesday, May 15, 2024, in Miami Gardens, Fla.

Associated Press

to Kansas City in the AFC championship game.

"I've given my entire life to this game," Beckham said, "and the way that it kind of went in the middle of the career, and even a little bit of last year, I can't go out like that. There's no way that I won't finish on a high note."

Beckham provides the Dolphins the solid third receiving option that they didn't have last season. He said he sees himself contributing a lot on third downs when

Hill and Waddle are facing double teams.

Hill and Waddle combined for more yards (2,813) than any other wide receiver duo in the NFL in 2023, but no other Dolphins receiver had more than 27 catches or 238 yards. Tight end Durham Smythe was Miami's third-leading receiver last season with 366 yards on 35 catches.

Being able to end his career on his terms is one of Beckham's goals for this next chapter. □

Milan wins chaotic sprint at end of 11th stage of Giro. Pogacar stays in pink

FRANCAVILLA AL MARE, Italy

(AP) — Italian cyclist Jonathan Milan sprinted to victory at the end of the 11th stage of the Giro d'Italia on Wednesday, while Tadej Pogacar kept his firm grip on the leader's pink jersey.

Milan, who rides for the Lidl-Trek team, edged out Tim Merlier and Kaden Groves in a bunch sprint that was made even more chaotic by the headwind at the finish at Francavilla al Mare.

Merlier hit the front first and must have thought he was set for his second win in this year's race but Milan blasted past him on the left to instead become the man to double up — after he also sprinted to victory on the fourth stage.

"I think today it's just unbelievable what the guys did for me," Milan said. "I have to say thanks from the bottom of my heart for this. I'm so happy to see their happy faces.



Italy's Jonathan Milan, center, crosses the finish line to win the 11th stage of the Giro d'Italia, Tour of Italy cycling race, from Foiano di Val Fortore to Francavilla al Mare, Italy, Wednesday, May 15, 2024.

Associated Press

"It's always tricky the final, how to predict him (Merlier) and how to move ... In the end I found myself on

his wheel. I think it was the perfect wheel. He started his sprint really, really, really strong but then I tried

to make mine and it went good." Milan won a stage last year on his Giro debut as well as the points jersey,

which he also currently holds. It was a lengthy slog on Wednesday but the 207-kilometer (129-mile) route from Foiano di Val Fortore featured just one third-category climb before it headed along the Adriatic coast. The final four kilometers had some risky road traffic but Pogacar finished safely with the rest of the contenders to maintain his lead of 2 minutes, 40 seconds ahead of Daniel Martinez.

Last year's runner-up Geraint Thomas, who is third, picked up two potentially valuable bonus seconds but was still 2:56 behind Pogacar.

Thursday's 12th stage starts flat along the coast but then cuts inland for four fourth-category climbs on a 193-kilometer (120-mile) route from Martinsicuro to Fano.

The Giro ends in Rome on May 26. □

William Contreras leads the way as Brewers hit 5 homers off Martín Pérez in 10-2 win over Pirates

By **STEVE MEGARGEE**
AP Sports Writer

MILWAUKEE (AP) — William Contreras went 3 for 5 with four RBIs and hit one of Milwaukee's five homers off Martín Pérez in the Brewers' 10-2 blowout of the Pittsburgh Pirates on Wednesday.

The NL Central-leading Brewers won two of three from the Pirates before beginning a season-long, nine-game trip Friday at Houston. The Brewers also will visit Miami and Boston before coming back home May 27 for a four-game series with the Chicago Cubs that marks ex-Brewers manager Craig Counsell's return to Milwaukee.

"I like the guys, I do," Brewers manager Pat Murphy said. "I really like them. They care.



Milwaukee Brewers' William Contreras reacts after hitting a three-run home run during the third inning of a baseball game against the Pittsburgh Pirates Wednesday, May 15, 2024, in Milwaukee. Associated Press

They're hungry. I love hungry players."

Gary Sánchez, Sal Frelick, Joey Ortiz and Jackson Chourio also homered off Pérez, who

gave up 11 hits and nine runs before leaving with nobody out in the sixth inning. Chourio's homer traveled 441 feet and Ortiz's blast went 425 feet.

"It's fun," Ortiz said. "Putting up that much on anyone is a good day. It's definitely exciting."

Pittsburgh's Andrew McCutchen went 3 for 4, homered and scored both the Pirates' runs. The Brewers tied a franchise record for homers off a single pitcher in one game. They also hit five home runs off Cincinnati's Chris Reitsma in 2002 and Cincinnati's Hunter Greene in 2022.

This was the Brewers' first five-homer game since a 9-0 rout of the New York Mets on April 4, 2023. The Pirates hadn't allowed as many as five homers in a game since July 6, 2022, when they gave up six in a 16-0 loss to the New York Yankees.

The Brewers nearly went deep

a sixth time. Pirates center fielder Michael A. Taylor reached his left arm over the wall to rob Willy Adames of a potential homer in the eighth inning.

Before Wednesday, Pérez had allowed just three homers all season while working 45 innings.

"Today he was just in the heart of the plate the entire game and then the changeup wasn't as effective as it's been previously," Pirates manager Derek Shelton said. "He left a couple of them up. And when you leave changeups up, they're going to get hit."

Five days after allowing just two hits over six shutout innings in his major league debut, Brewers starter Robert Gasser (2-0) gave up just one run in five innings while allowing eight hits. Gasser struck out two and walked one.

The team said Gasser is the first pitcher in Brewers history to earn a win in each of his first two major league appearances.

TRANSACTIONS

The Brewers promoted outfielder Chris Roller from Triple-A Nashville and optioned infielder Oliver Dunn to Nashville. They also reinstated Taylor Clarke from the 15-day injured list and optioned him to Nashville. The Pirates recalled pitcher Carmen Mlodzinski from Triple-A Indianapolis and optioned pitcher Quinn Priester to Indianapolis.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Brewers first baseman Rhys Hoskins says he's planning to travel with the team on its nine-game trip that begins this weekend even as he's on the injured list after straining his right hamstring Monday. Hoskins is expected to miss two to four weeks.

"I've been around enough guys with hamstring issues to know they're pretty fickle and each one is just so, so different," Hoskins said. "So I think all in all, the two to four weeks is much better than it could have been. I'm just bummed and disappointed to not be out there with these guys as we're trying to continue to stack some wins and stack some series wins." □

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