



House Republicans taking a key vote toward impeaching Mayorkas as border becomes 2024 campaign issue

By LISA MASCARO and REBECCA SANTANA

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans are ready to take a key vote Tuesday toward impeaching Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas over what they call his "willful and systematic" refusal to enforce immigration laws as border security becomes a top 2024 election issue.

The Homeland Security Committee is pushing through a day-long hearing on two articles of impeachment against Mayorkas, a rare charge against a Cabinet official unseen in nearly 150 years, as Republicans make GOP presidential front-runner Donald Trump's hard-line deportation approach to immigration their own.



Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas testifies on Capitol Hill, Nov. 8, 2023, in Washington.

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House Republicans taking a key vote toward impeaching Mayorkas as border becomes 2024 campaign issue

Continued from Front

"The actions and decisions of Secretary Mayorkas have left us with no other option but to proceed with articles of impeachment," said Chairman Mark Green, R-Tenn. The articles charge that Mayorkas "willfully and systematically refused to comply with Federal immigration laws" amid a record surge

of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border and that he has "breached the public trust" in his claims to Congress that the border is secure. A committee vote would send the articles to the full House for a vote as soon as next week. "We cannot allow this man to remain in office any longer," Green said. With an unusual personal appeal Mayorkas wrote in

a letter to the committee that it should be working with the Biden administration to update the nation's "broken and outdated" immigration laws for the 21st century and an era of record global migration. "We need a legislative solution and only Congress can provide it," Mayorkas wrote in the pointed letter to the panel's chairman.

Mayorkas never testified on his own behalf during the rushed impeachment proceedings — he and the committee couldn't agree on a date — but drew on his own background as a child brought to the U.S. by his parents fleeing Cuba and on his career spent prosecuting criminals. "Your false accusations do not rattle me and do not divert me" from public service, he wrote.

Green, the Republican committee chair, disparaged Mayorkas's letter as an "11th-hour response" to the committee that was "inadequate and unbecoming of a Cabinet secretary." Rarely has a Cabinet member faced impeachment's bar of "high crimes and misdemeanors" and Democrats on the panel called the proceedings a stunt and a sham that could set a chilling precedent for other civil servants snared in policy disputes by lawmakers who disagree with the president's approach.

"This is a terrible day for the committee, the United States, the Constitution and our great country," said Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, the committee's ranking Democrat. Referring to Trump's campaign slogan, Thompson said the "MAGA-led impeachment of Secretary Mayorkas is a baseless sham." The House's proceedings against Mayorkas have created an oddly split-screen Capitol Hill, as the Senate works intently with the secretary on a bipartisan border security package that is now on life support. The package being negotiated by the senators with Mayorkas could emerge as the most consequential bipartisan immigration proposal in a decade. Or it could collapse

in political failure as Republicans, and some Democrats, run from the effort. Trump, on the campaign trail and in private talks, has tried to squelch the deal. "I'd rather have no bill than a bad bill," Trump said over the weekend in Las Vegas. President Joe Biden, in his own campaign remarks in South Carolina, said if Congress sends him a bill with emergency authority he'll "shut down the border right now" to get migration under control. "I've done all I can do," Biden told reporters Tuesday before departing for a campaign-related trip to Florida. "Give me the power" through legislation, which he said is something he's asked "from the very day I got in office." The Republicans are focused on the secretary's handling of the southern border, which has experienced an increasing number of migrants over the past year, many seeking asylum in the U.S., at a time when drug cartels are using the border with Mexico to traffic people and ship deadly fentanyl into the states. Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., a Trump ally often mentioned as vice presidential pick, called it an "invasion." Republicans contend that the Biden administration and Mayorkas either got rid of policies in place under Trump that had controlled migration or enacted policies of their own that encouraged migrants from around the world to come to the U.S. illegally via the southern border. Speaker Mike Johnson said Biden and Mayorkas have "created a catastrophe" on the border, and he criticized the emerging Senate package. The GOP leader said the president is now trying to turn the blame back on Congress for failing to update immigration laws. □

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Biden says he's decided on response to killing of 3 U.S. troops, plans to attend dignified transfer

By AAMER MADHANI and ZEKE MILLER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Tuesday indicated he had decided how to respond after the killing of three American service members Sunday in a drone attack in Jordan that his administration has pinned on Iran-backed militia groups, saying he does not want to expand the war in the Middle East but demurring on specifics.

U.S. officials said they are still determining which of several Iran-backed groups was responsible for the first killing of American troops in a wave of attacks against U.S. forces in the region since the Oct. 7 Hamas assault on Israel. Biden plans to attend the dignified transfer to mark the fallen troops' return to American soil on Friday and answered in the affirmative when asked by reporters if he'd decided on a response, as he indicated he was aiming to prevent further escalation. "I don't think we need a wider war in the Middle East," Biden said at the White House before departing for a fundraising trip to Florida. "That's not what I'm looking for."

It was not immediately clear whether Biden meant he had decided on a specific retaliatory plan. A U.S. official told The Associated Press that the Pentagon is still assessing options to respond to the attack in Jordan.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters traveling with Biden aboard Air Force One that he would not preview the U.S. response, but indicated it would come in phases.

"It's very possible that what you'll see is a tiered approach here, not just a single action, but potentially multiple actions over a period of time," he said. Meanwhile, the Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib



In this image provided by The White House, President Joe Biden receives the Presidential Daily Briefing, Monday, Jan. 29, 2024, in the White House Situation Room at the White House in Washington, as Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin listens.

Associated Press

"He was grateful for their time. He expressed to them how proud we all are of their service," Kirby said of Biden's calls with the families. "How we mourn and feel sorrow over their loss." Kirby added: "The president will be going to the dignified transfer on Friday."

The solemn ceremony marks the return of fallen service members to American soil as they journey to their final resting place, with silent honor guards carrying flag-draped transfer cases holding the remains from transport aircraft to military vehicles. □

Hezbollah, one of several groups eyed by U.S. officials, announced Tuesday in a statement "the suspension of military and security operations against the occupation forces in order to prevent embarrassment to the Iraqi government."

The attacks on U.S. forces by Iraqi militias over the past four months have placed the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani in an awkward position. Sudani was brought to power by Iranian-allied factions but has also attempted to stay in Washington's good graces and has condemned the attacks on U.S. forces serving in Iraq as part of an international commission to fight the Islamic State. Iraqi and U.S. officials on Saturday opened talks aimed at winding down the commission's presence.

Kirby said that Biden spoke with the soldiers' families Tuesday morning and extended his condolences, pledging full assistance to the families as they grieve. In separate calls with the families, Biden also gauged their feelings about his attendance at Friday's dignified transfer of the fallen service members' remains at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware on Friday, and "all of them supported his presence there," Kirby said.

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Massachusetts state troopers arrested for taking bribes to pass commercial drivers on test

By **MICHAEL CASEY**

Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Two current and two former Massachusetts State Police troopers were among six people charged Tuesday in a scheme to allegedly take bribes including a new snowblower and driveway in exchange for giving passing scores on commercial driving tests, the U.S. attorney's office said.

The troopers are accused of falsifying records and giving preferential treatment to at least 17 drivers from May 2019 to January 2023, who were taking their commercial drivers license or CDL test. Even when the drivers failed a skills test, the troopers passed them and communicated they had done so with a text and the code word golden. Some troopers even joked in the text messages how badly a driver had performed on the test, according to the indictment.

"In short, as is alleged in this indictment, CDLs were for sale," Acting United States Attorney Joshua S.



Massachusetts State Police Sgt. Gary Cederquist, center, leaves federal court. Tuesday, Jan 30, 2024, in Boston.

Levy told reporters. "Troopers were bribed with free goods to pass applicants no matter how they performed on the test."

Sgt. Gary Cederquist, 58, of Stoughton, and Trooper Joel Rogers, 54, of Bridgewater, were arrested Tuesday. Calvin Butner, 63, of Halifax, and Perry Mendes,

63, of Wareham, both retired state troopers, were arrested in Florida Monday. All four face more than 70 counts on a range of charges including conspiracy to falsify records, extortion and making false statements.

Two others, Eric Mathison, 47, of Boston and Scott

Camara, 42, of Rehoboth, were also implicated in the scheme. Cederquist, Rogers, Mathison and Camara made their initial appearance Tuesday afternoon and pleaded not guilty to the charges. Butner and Mendes were expected to make appearances at a later date. A phone num-

ber could not be found for any of the six and their lawyers did not respond for a request for comment.

Cederquist, who also is accused of helping four state troopers get commercial drivers licenses, is accused of accepting a new driveway worth \$10,000 and a snowblower valued at \$2,000 and a \$750 granite mailbox. Cederquist also asked for a shed and a plunge pool in exchange for passing drivers.

"Let me be clear. Those named in this indictment that have lost their moral compass and they will be held accountable" Michael Krol, special agent in charge for Homeland Security Investigations New England, said. "Their actions, however, should not tarnish the reputation of an entire institution especially for the overwhelming majority of public servants in the Massachusetts State Police and fire service who serve the citizens of our commonwealth day in and day out with pride, honor and integrity." □

Associated Press

New York expands the legal definition of rape to include many forms of nonconsensual sexual contact

By **MAYSOON KHAN**

Associated Press/Report for America

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — New York will expand its legal definition of rape to include various forms of non-consensual sexual contact, under a bill signed into law by Gov. Kathy Hochul on Tuesday.

The state's current limited definition was a factor in writer E. Jean Carroll's sexual abuse and defamation case against former President Donald Trump. The jury in the federal civil trial rejected the writer's claim last May that Trump had raped her in the 1990s, instead finding the former president responsible for a lesser degree of sexual abuse.

The current law defines rape as vaginal penetration by a penis. The new law broadens the definition to include nonconsensual anal, oral, and vaginal sex-

ual contact. Highlighting Carroll's case at a bill signing ceremony in Albany, the Democratic governor said the new definition will make it easier for rape vic-

tims to bring cases forward to prosecute perpetrators. The law will apply to sexual assaults committed on or after Sept. 1.

"The problem is, rape is very difficult to prosecute," Hochul said. "Physical technicalities confuse jurors and humiliate survivors and create a legal gray area that defendants exploit."

In Carroll's case against Trump, which stemmed from an encounter at a Manhattan luxury department store, the judge later said that the jury's decision was based on "the narrow, technical meaning" of rape in New York penal law and that, in his analysis, the verdict did not mean that Carroll "failed to prove that Mr. Trump 'raped' her

as many people commonly understand the word 'rape.'"

At Tuesday's bill signing, state Sen. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, who sponsored the legislation, said the new changes would also make it easier for members of the LGBTQ community to hold perpetrators of sex crimes accountable.

"We can't have our laws ignore the reality that so many New Yorkers, particularly LGBTQ New Yorkers, among others, have experienced," the Democrat said.

"Before today, many of those assaults wouldn't be able to be classified as rape in New York state," he said. "But now we fixed that language," he said. □



New York Gov. Kathy Hochul arrives at the Red Room at the state Capitol, Jan. 16, 2024, in Albany, N.Y.

Associated Press

U.S. and China launch talks on fentanyl trafficking in a sign of cooperation amid differences

By KEN MORITSUGU

Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — American and Chinese officials committed Tuesday to working together to stem the flow of fentanyl into the United States, the head of a visiting U.S. delegation said. Their meeting was a hopeful sign of cooperation as the two global powers try to better manage their contentious ties. The U.S. is seeking more information sharing and law enforcement cooperation and the designation and control of made-in-China chemicals that are ingredients for fentanyl made elsewhere, said Jen Daskal, a deputy homeland security advisor in the White House.

"Obviously we need to see the results and we need to see action," she said in a phone interview after the meeting.

"But there was a real spirit of cooperation and a commitment to working together."

The first meeting of a new U.S.-China counternarcotics working group will be followed by more in-depth



U.S. Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Homeland Security Advisor Jen Daskal, left, shakes hands with Chinese Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong before a meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2024.

meetings in smaller groups on Wednesday. Fentanyl, the synthetic opioid that is ravaging America, is a major focus, and in particular the ingredients and pill presses for the drug that come from China.

Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to restart cooperation in drug trafficking and

a handful of other areas when he and U.S. President Joe Biden met outside San Francisco in November. The agreements were a small step forward in a relationship strained by major differences on issues ranging from trade and technology to Taiwan and human rights.

The U.S. wants China to do more to curb the export of chemicals that it says are processed into fentanyl, largely in Mexico, before the final product is smuggled into the United States. Chinese Public Security Minister Wang Xiaohong said the two sides had in-depth and pragmatic talks.

Associated Press

"We reached common understanding on the work plan for the working group," he said at a ceremony marking the inauguration of the group.

Daskal said that Biden had sent a high-level delegation "to underscore the importance of this issue to the American people."

She said there have been some drops in shipments of fentanyl "precursors" from China since the Biden-Xi meeting and stressed the importance of information sharing to identify trends and keep up with fentanyl producers who come up with substitutes when supplies of a particular ingredient dry up.

"There's a real sense of urgency," she said, noting the high number of fentanyl-related fatalities in the United States and the violence, corruption and instability fueled by drug cartels around the world. China used to be a major supplier of fentanyl, and the U.S. has credited Beijing for a 2019 crackdown that led to "a drastic reduction in seizures of fentanyl shipments ... from China." □

Colombia and the National Liberation Army rebels extend cease-fire for a week as talks continue

By MANUEL RUEDA

Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Colombia's government and the nation's largest remaining rebel group announced Monday they will extend their current cease-fire by one week, while delegates from both sides who are meeting in Cuba continue to discuss policies that could secure a longer lasting truce.

In a joint statement, the government and the National Liberation Army said they will abide by the conditions of the current cease-fire, which began in August and was set to expire Monday night.

The current cease-fire

agreement says that both sides will not attack each other, and that one of the goals of the cease-fire is to "improve the humanitarian situation" of communities affected by fighting.

However, there are no provisions in the current cease-fire that stop the rebels from kidnapping civilians for ransom or from recruiting minors, two practices that have continued to take place in the last months.

The rebels meanwhile have complained that during the current cease-fire, the military has launched operations in areas under their control.

In Monday's joint statement, both sides said they

will continue to discuss ways to "strengthen" the cease-fire.

Colombia's government has been pressing the rebels to stop kidnappings. But the group has asked the government for alternate ways to finance their operations, and have said that they will only stop kidnappings as part of a new cease-fire agreement.

In October, the cease-fire between the government and the ELN entered a critical moment when a group of rebels kidnapped the parents of Luis Diaz, one of Colombia's most famous soccer players. Diaz's mother was quickly rescued by police. □



Colombian President Gustavo Petro holds a ceremony to formally begin a six-month cease-fire as part of a process to forge permanent peace with the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Bogota, Colombia, Aug. 3, 2023.

Associated Press

Global anti-corruption efforts are faltering, partly due to a 'decline in justice,' survey finds

By **GEIR MOULSON**

Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Efforts to fight public sector corruption are faltering around the world, in part because a "global decline in justice and the rule of law since 2016," according to a corruption index released Tuesday.

Transparency International, which compiles the annual Corruption Perceptions Index, found 23 countries at their worst level since the global ranking began almost three decades ago, including both high-ranking democracies and authoritarian states.

On the reported decline in justice, the group said that "the rise of authoritarianism in some countries contributes to this trend, and even in democratic contexts, the mechanisms that keep governments in check have weakened."

"Corruption will continue to thrive until justice systems can punish wrongdoing and keep governments in check," Transparency International chair



Department store windows display the Danish flag and the Danish crown in Copenhagen, Denmark, Saturday evening, Jan. 13, 2024.

Associated Press

François Valérian said in a statement. He added that "leaders should fully invest in and guarantee the independence of institutions that uphold the law and tackle corruption."

The organization measures the perception of public sector corruption accord-

ing to 13 data sources including the World Bank, the World Economic Forum and private risk and consulting companies. It ranks 180 countries and territories on a scale from a "highly corrupt" 0 to a "very clean" 100.

Among the countries hit-

ting their lowest level were relatively high-scoring democracies such as Iceland, the Netherlands, Sweden and Britain. Authoritarian countries including Iran, Russia and Venezuela also dropped.

Denmark led the index with the highest score for

the sixth consecutive year, with 90. It was followed by Finland with 87 and New Zealand with 85. The others in the top 10 were Norway, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg.

The United States was unchanged with a score of 69, putting it in 24th place.

At the other end, Somalia again had the weakest score with 11. It was followed by South Sudan, Syria and Venezuela with 13 each; Yemen with 16; and Equatorial Guinea, Haiti, North Korea and Nicaragua with 17 each.

The global average was unchanged at 43 for the 12th consecutive year, and more than two-thirds of countries scored below 50. The report found "little to no meaningful progress" toward curbing corruption in the Asia-Pacific region, and expressed concerns about "opacity and undue influence" in justice systems in Latin America and the Caribbean. □

South Africa evacuates small coastal communities near Cape Town as wildfires burn out of control

By **GERALD IMRAY**

Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — Residents were evacuated from small coastal towns near Cape Town in South Africa as wildfires swept down from surrounding mountains and burned out of control for a second day on Tuesday.

Authorities ordered a full evacuation of Pringle Bay, a coastal village popular with holidaymakers about 80 kilometers (50 miles) from Cape Town. People evacuated parts of the nearby town of Betty's Bay on Monday.

Wildfires are relatively common in the mountain ranges around Cape Town and further down the coast in the South African summer, but it's unusual for towns to

be completely evacuated. The fires began Monday and were fueled by the hot, dry weather and strong coastal winds. Anelie Rabie, mayor of the Overstrand municipality that oversees the towns,

said as many as six wildfires had broken out in the area. Four had been contained or extinguished, she said, but one was heading straight for Pringle Bay.

The Overstrand government said a small number

of homes had been gutted. No injuries were reported but authorities issued a code red, meaning the fires presented a serious and immediate danger to people and property.

Around 95% of a nearby nature reserve had also burned, the government said. Residents of Pringle Bay were moving to a nearby town, local authorities said, while firefighters battled to get remaining fires under control. Helicopters were scooping up water from the ocean and dumping it on the fires, a common tactic in the region. Wildfires have broken out in numerous parts of South Africa's Western Cape province in recent weeks, including one on the slopes of the world-famous Ta-

ble Mountain overlooking Cape Town over the weekend. It was quickly brought under control.

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment said its firefighting crews were working on wildfires in four regions of the Western Cape. One fire had been burning for nine days.

A huge fire swept across Table Mountain in 2021, causing extensive damage and taking days to put out.

The main causes of the wildfires are discarded cigarettes, people lighting cooking fires or burning debris and sometimes arson, according to the Western Cape local government. Coastal winds fan the blazes and can make them unpredictable. □



Firefighters battle wildfires in Pringle Bay, near Cape Town, South Africa, Tuesday, Jan. 30 2024.

Associated Press

Po-kè Ono - A Taste of Asia with a Twist: Exploring Flavorful Fusion



Amidst the vibrant paradise of Aruba, where turquoise waters meet golden sands, a culinary gem awaits: Po-kè Ono, the coolest Asian fusion spot that will whisk you away on an exotic flavor adventure. Experience an explosion of Asian tastes like never before led by the creative genius of Chef Urvin Croes, the mastermind behind Aruba's acclaimed Infini restaurant. Po-kè Ono serves up an enticing menu that blends traditional Asian flavors with modern twists, all within a cheery ambiance that exudes warmth and tropical charm.

At Po-kè Ono, diners can savor an array of flavors from the new menu items that stand out for their artful presentation and delectable taste. One of the highlights is the traditional Vietnamese Pho, a soul-soothing soup consisting of bone broth, rice noodles, succulent thinly sliced meat, fresh herbs, and zesty spices, making it an explosion of taste in every spoonful.

Another must-try dish is The Elvis Presley Bao, a playful homage to the King of Rock 'n' Roll. This fun creation features fried spam with sweet teriyaki, peanut sauce, crispy fried plantains, crisp lettuce, red onions, and a spicy kick from the Kewpie mayo. The combination of sweet, savory, and spicy flavors is a harmony that leaves guests coming back for more.

If you're craving a delicious fusion of Indonesian and Hawaiian influences, the Babi Sate Poke hits all the right notes. Indonesian-style pork skewers are served with rich peanut sauce, crunchy crispy onions, pickled cucumber, and creamy avocado, resulting in a medley of textures and flavors that captivate the palate.

Beyond the flavors, Po-kè Ono impresses with its thoughtfully curated ambiance that reflects the Asian fusion theme. With two locations in Renaissance Marketplace and the lobby of Azure Residence, the restaurant exudes a tropical and laid-back vibe, inviting guests to unwind and indulge in a delightful dining experience. The use of fun cocktail glasses and relaxed decor further enhances the sense of pleasure, making every visit a memorable one.



Get ready for double the fun at Po-kè Ono with their awesome two-for-one happy hour. From 4 pm to 6 pm, this fantastic deal lets you dive into selected items at an incredible value. It's the perfect opportunity to try out their fresh new menu while sipping on delightful beverages.

Meet the culinary maestro, Chef Urvin Croes, the creative force behind Po-kè Ono and Infini. With an unyielding passion for Asian cuisine, rooted in his Chinese heritage, he sprinkles his magic on every plate at Po-kè Ono, crafting innovative and artfully delicious dishes. Having honed his skills in top-notch hotel restaurants and even snatching the title of 'Iron Chef Aruba's first winner,' Chef Urvin's culinary expertise shines through in every mouth-watering bite.

Promoting Aruba as a culinary destination, Chef Urvin sources ingredients locally whenever possible, supporting farmers who share his passion for quality produce. The result is a menu that expertly balances traditional recipes with modern techniques, elevating every dish to new heights. His love for food and the cultural stories behind each creation are evident in the passionate manner in which he prepares and presents his dishes.

Notably, Po-kè Ono has earned its well-deserved reputation as the number one restaurant on Tripadvisor Palm Beach, a testament to its success and popularity among locals and tourists alike.

Po-kè Ono is like a treasure trove of Asian fusion delights, all crafted with love and expertise by the one and only Chef Urvin Croes. You'll be treated to an array of dishes, from Pho to



inventive Bao creations, each artfully presented. The relaxed ambiance and awesome two-for-one happy hour make dining here an absolute pleasure. Once you've tasted the magic of Po-kè Ono, you'll be coming back for more! So, what are you waiting for? Dive in and indulge in this captivating world of Asian-inspired goodness! □



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The yearly training called “Barracuda Warrior” has been completed



The yearly military training, called “Barracuda Warrior”, this year the training took place in Curaçao from January 15th to January 29th. This training brought together several units from the Dutch Caribbean Region, under which the Marine Squadron Carib from Aruba, the Marine detachment from Saint Maarten, the Boat platoon from Curaçao, the Brigade in the West and a platoon from the Curaçao military operate. In total, 185 Soldiers participated in this training.

The objective of the exercise was to reinforce the cooperation between the diverse units which normally are stationed on several dif-

ferent islands. The activities during Barracuda Warrior entail amongst other things, shooting exercises, amphibious runs (both day and night), operating in urban areas and simulating planned and unplanned attacks.

The Soldiers from Curaçao are increasingly participating each time in major military exercises in the context of professionalizing the Caribbean military. In addition to that, joint training increases operational effectiveness in the Dutch Caribbean Region.

Barracuda Warrior remains an important mili-



tary exercise to promote the readiness and cohesion of maritime and land forces in the Caribbean. This supports the Defense's mission in the Caribbean: rendering peace and security in the region. □



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free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from Dr. Michele Sellitto and Olivia Doyle who are visiting us from Harrisburg and Yardley Pennsylvania.

They wrote to us saying: “Aruba to me is my annual month long winter break with total relaxation, perfect weather and great times with family and friends—there's nothing better!”

Photo left Dr. Michele Sellitto & right her niece Olivia Doyle.

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □

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National Park Arikok: Aruba's biggest nature conservation

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 are numerous animals to discover, for example the sea turtle who lays his eggs on the park's beaches.

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 (*Sterna 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.

Nature Conservation

The protected area of National Park Arikok was officially established in 2000. Arikok National Park is a 34 square kilometers (7907 acres) of natural area, located at the north-eastern part of Aruba which contains examples of most of the island's flora and fauna against a backdrop of great geological complexity. We are proud to state that approximately 18% of the total land area of Aruba is assigned as a National

Park, to protect and preserve the flora, fauna, geology and historical remains present within Arikok National Park.

The Landscape

There is a great geological variety within the park. The main aspects are the rough hills of the volcanic Aruba lava formation, the mysterious rocks of the batholithic quartz-diorite/tonalite, and the limestone rocks from fossilized coral. The two tallest hills on the island are situated within the park. Jamanota hill 188 meters (617 ft) and Arikok hill 176 meters (577 ft), from which the name of the park is derived.

The line of the permanently wind-and-wave beaten North Coast is broken by several bays (boca's). Most of them are small yet impressive inlets at the mouth of dry riverbeds. Some of these bays (boca's) are spectacular sights, adorned with white, sandy beaches and sand dunes, as is the case at Boca Prins and Dos Playa.

Arikok is also home to Conchi, Aruba's most important natural attraction; also known as The Natural Pool. The journey to the Pool is an adventure by itself and only possible by foot, horse, ATV or 4x4 vehicle.

Cultural and Historical components

There are a number of sites within the park that attest to the history of Aruba. The Caquetío Indians left rock paintings in Cunucu Arikok and Fontein Cave. The bird drawing in the park logo is a copy of one of these historical artistic expressions.

Old plantation (Cunucus) sites tell the story of an active yet challenging agricultural past.



These Cunucus were also residential areas for the few families that worked the land. These families found ways to survive in the difficult conditions, and were able to erect their homes with materials found in the area. Two of these adobe houses have been restored. Park rangers are learning many of the old building techniques in order to preserve this unique Aruban mud-house. At Cunucu Arikok and near Plantation Prins you can find these adobe houses.

Park Management

For the management of the park, a dedicated foundation "Fundacion Parke Nacional Arikok" (FPNA), known today as the Aruba National Park Foundation was established in July 2003. In February 2017, mangrove and wetland RAMSAR site #198 Spanish Lagoon was annexed to Arikok National Park due to its importance as a feeding and breeding area for water birds and as a nursery area for a variety of marine organisms. With this addition, the areas under FPNA management increased by 70 hectares while the amount of species of flora and fauna to be conserved to over 250. On December 21st, 2018 (AB 2018 no. 77) Parke Marino Aruba – currently consisting of four marine protected areas (MPAs) – was officially established and subsequently brought under management of FPNA. In 2019 management plans will be established for the new MPAs which include: coral reefs, sea grass beds, mangrove systems, a large diversity of breeding seabirds. Parke Marino Aruba also contains potential shark nursery areas, endangered sea turtle nesting beaches and marine mammal nursery areas. □





Article by Etnia Nativa

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Livelihood before tourism (Part II)

Each week, Etnia Nativa presents a new cultural heritage and native knowledge episode. Awakening responsibility to acknowledge heritage, traditions, and the limited space our people had to live on. Sharing today part II of our brief introduction to the history of how Aruba's livelihood was before oil and tourism. Natives faced a constant existential adaptation since the beginning of the Spanish era until the gold rush.

Aruba's gainful economic life has known periods of dire extremes. There have been occasions of near famine as a result of net-to-no means of support since a great part of what the island could produce during good or bad times had to be shipped to Curacao. Periods of quick, short-lived prosperity and a stable economy based primarily on oil refining followed.

Another very profitable enterprise in Aruba's pre-petroleum days was the mining of phosphate. During the period of 1881-1914, the Aruba Phosphaat Maatschappij * exported one million tons of phosphate. It was originally found in 1874 at Cerro Corrá (Colorado Point), and today remnants of equipment used, bent, broken, and rust covered remain in some of the large pits behind the hill where Lago Hospital used to stand. The industry ceased operation in 1914, when the price of phosphate on the world market decreased and was replaced by chemical fertilizers.

An industry that has had a century of ups and downs is the harvesting of aloe. ** The aloe is a small plant that grows in a splay-like fashion relatively close to

and 18 inches from the ground. The plant produces aloin, a cathartic ingredient said to have no synthetic superior. With climatic conditions perfect for the plant's growth, the output of the aruban-grown aloe's aloin was much higher than that of other varieties. Aruban-grown aloe has an aloin content of 22 percent, compared to a high of 15 percent for the best aloe grown elsewhere. The brutal price fluctuations on the world market forced many aloe growers to discontinue operations. Many workers left the fields when the oil companies arrived and paid higher wages. Consequently, numerous aloe fields have been abandoned. The aloe is not from Aruba; it is originally from the island of Socotra off the west coast of Africa. It was brought here in 1861.

Petrol brought another kind of prosperity to Aruba and has been the basis of a strong economy for over a quarter of a century. The Arend Petroleum Maatschappij, a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell, established itself on the western end of the island today, in the Divi and Tamarijn Hotel areas. A small refinery, it maintained operations until January 1953. At the opposite end of

the island, a giant in the oil world, Lago Oil & Transport Co., Ltd., strictly a refinery, had its start in the late twenties. Originally a subsidiary of the Standard Oil Co. (India), it was purchased in 1932 by the Standard Oil Co. (N.J.). Other means of subsistence have been adopted by the inhabitants of Aruba, all with varying degrees of success. Vocations over the years included making rope and straw hats, growing peanuts, shipbuilding's, brick and potters, cultivating the one-way divi-divi tree for its pods used in the preparation of tannic acid, growing pigment bugs, blacksmith and carpentry, farming, fishing, and sailing.

When Lago Aruba Refinery decided to automate their refining industry, layoffs began so quickly that an unemployment problem arose because Aruba did not expatriate unemployed foreign workers. In order to broaden the basis of an economic existence, plans were made to attract cruise ships. The arrival of The Trade Wind, the first cruise ship of that time, on February 5, 1955, had become a historical event. ***

The construction of the first high-rise hotel, The Aruba Caribbean Hotel and Casino, attracted the jetset and famous of Hollywood, celebrities and movie stars. Tourism promised great benefits. About sharing our island's virgin land scape, white sand beaches and mistical geo formations. A offering of a considerable source of income if we to opened up our home, our house, our beloved rock.



Uncover and experience the native inspiration of your travel destination. You may like the flora, fauna, geology, history, native art, or shamanic practices of Aruba, so ground yourself in a unique native gem, an exclusive cabinet of curiosities where our acclaimed cultural columnist introduces you to a connecting conference. Visit Etnia Nativa, a magnificent home that integrates reused materials with nature and is full of island culture and heritage! Book your appointment through Whats App +297 592 2702 etnianativa03@gmail.com.□

* Island Insight episode CXX- 120, episode XLI - 41.

** Island Insight episode XLIII - 43.

*** Island Insight episode XCIII 93.

Visit the island's popular cave sites!

(Oranjestad)—Among the endless sea of dark brown sand and cacti, there are two caves hidden in the outskirts of San Nicolas, in the north-eastern area of the island. These caves, The Quadirikiri cave and The Fontein Cave are open to visitors of the Arikok National Park, so if you ever decide to take an “off-road” tour in the park, be sure to visit these prehistoric caves...and be sure to bring a flashlight!

Quadirikiri Cave

Known for its two chambers accompanied by a skylight, the Quadirikiri Cave is the most popular cave among locals and tourists, as it is easy to walk through and provides great lighting for pictures.

As with all prehistoric or ancient sites, there is always a folk legend that adds to the lore and mystery of the site. The Quadirikiri cave is no different. The most well-known legend behind the cave could be considered as Aruba's first love story, as it tells the tale of the undying love between the chief's daughter and her beloved. As legend would have it, the chief disapproved of his daughter's choice of lover, as he thought him unworthy. Stubborn and filled with anger, the daughter refused to turn away her beloved.

So, the chief decided to lock her up in the Quadirikiri Cave, in hopes that she would soon calm down and turn away her lover. Her beloved, in turn, was locked away in the Tunnel of Love (Now known as the Huliba Cave).

Through the pathways underneath the Tunnel of Love running up to the Quadirikiri cave, the two love birds found each other, and refused to let each other go. Because of their stubbornness, they both died in the Quadirikiri Cave, their ascending spirits burning two holes in the ceiling of the cave. This is why the cave has two holes through which sunlight passes through to illuminate the chamber.

Though there have been discoveries of Amerindian drawing on the wall, these have mostly been ruined by vandalism. However, the Fontein Cave further up north, provides a better glimpse in prehistoric Amerindian paintings.

Fontein Cave

Longer than the Quadirikiri Cave, the Fontein Cave contains pathways that stretch to the limestone walls further down. Here is also where prehistoric drawings can be seen. Though this cave does not have its own legend, this was speculated to have been occupied—or at least used by prehistoric Arawak settlers on the island for rituals and other spiritual ceremonies.

The Huliba Cave/ Tunnel of Love

The Huliba Cave, formerly known as the Tunnel of Love, was once open to the public, and was the biggest and most accessible of all three caves. This cave had five chambers, including one that is heart-shaped. This cave had narrow stairs that led to long pathways deep into the cave, with a staircase leading to the exit on the other side. In one of the chambers, there used to be the carving of the Virgin Mary, put there for the protection of the cave.

However, the Huliba Cave has been permanently closed for a few years now, as a way to preserve the bat population that lives in the cave. These Long Tongue Fruit Bats and Insect Eater Bats are very important to the ecosystem of the island. Though this cave is no longer accessible to the public, it surely is interesting to learn more about the history of these caves and the Awarak tribes that resided or utilized them.

Do note that these caves are very dark, humid, hot, and are inhabited by bats. Do wear comfortable clothing and shoes, as the pathways in these caves may be rough and bumpy, and don't forget to bring a flashlight!☐



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 44 "Dracula" author

1 Longing
5 Jar
11 Challenge

DOWN

12 Aviator
13 Plow
14 Block and tackle part

15 Pot part
16 Maid's target
17 "Fingers crossed..."

19 Spot to jot
22 Software test versions

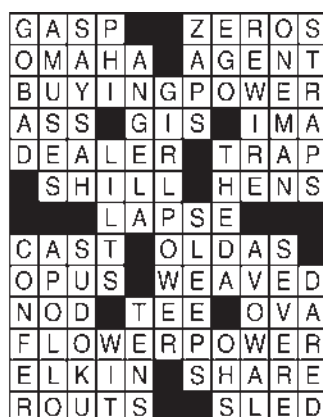
24 Private's boss
26 Declare
27 New driver, often

28 Annoying folks
30 Rum drink
31 Donkey

32 City square
34 Linen source
35 Keg need

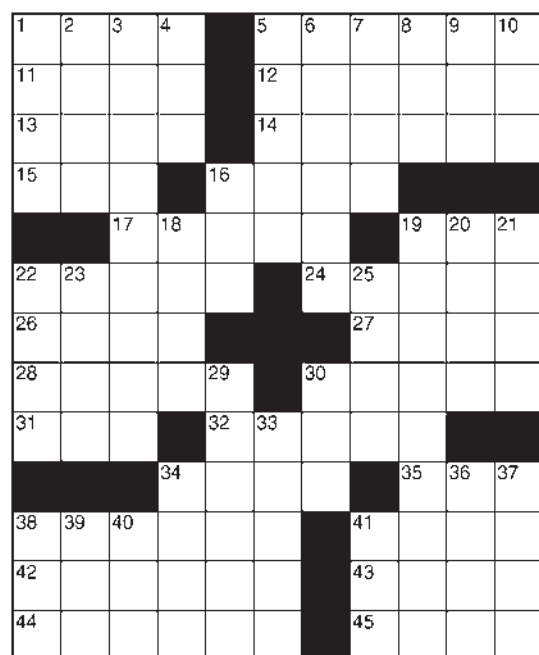
38 Find not guilty
41 Deep sleep
42 Spring

43 Steel ingredient



Yesterday's answer

18 War backer	30 Receipt line
19 Quarry stalkers	33 In a while
20 Mature	34 Depression
21 Turn down	36 Wild
22 Mexican peninsula	37 Scathing reviews
23 Nights before	38 Crunch targets
25 Whole range	39 Barracks bed
29 Film edit	40 Status —



1-31

AXYDLBAAXR
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.

1-31 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

W U U C L D W X V D C A E E A E C Z

Z X W L X A E X G D H W L R , Q G D E

X G D F S S E C L D D X Z T S J X S W

E D Q H W T W X F A H E A C G X .

— Z G W E E S E U . W U H D L

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: WHAT IS THERE MORE KINDLY THAN THE FEELING BETWEEN HOST AND GUEST? — AESCHYLUS

Millennial Money: The 4 longevity questions you should ask your financial planner

By KATE ASHFORD of Nerd-Wallet

Only one-third of men correctly estimated how long a 60-year-old man in the U.S. could expect to live, according to a 2022 TIAA Institute survey. And fewer than half of women got it right for a 60-year-old woman.

Advisers call this understanding how long you'll live in your retirement years longevity literacy. It's a crucial part of your retirement strategy, and it's important that you and your financial professional are on the same page. You should be talking about things like what your planner is using as your life expectancy, how you'll cover future health care costs and whether you need to account for any spending related to aging parents. Getting this right means your money will last for as

long as you do. Here are the questions to ask your adviser.

1. WHAT ARE YOU USING AS MY LIFE EXPECTANCY?

No one can know when they're going to die, but your health and family history can help your planner make a good guess. How long did your parents live, or your grandparents? Do you have any health conditions?

"I've started, a few years ago, asking a lot of health questions of my clients," says Mitchell Kraus, a certified financial planner in Santa Monica, California. "They should let their adviser know of any health concerns that might cause their life expectancy to be shorter."

Planners often work with software that can model what will happen to your finances if you die at different ages, based on the

assumptions you're making. You can explore various scenarios together and decide what makes the most sense.

"If you've got longevity in your family, let's boost it up to (age) 97 or even 100," says Timothy Knotts, a CFP in Red Bank, New Jersey. □



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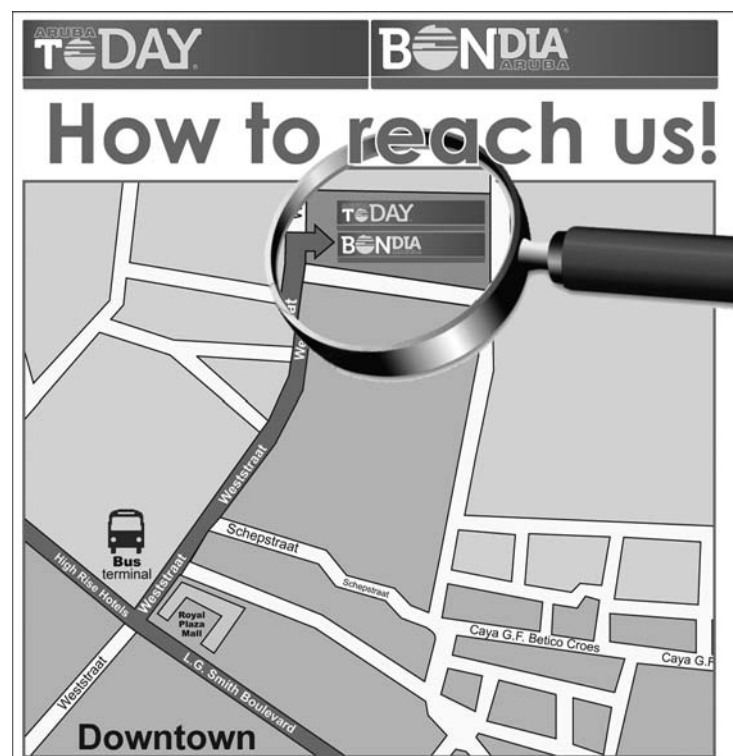
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Chita Rivera, revered and pioneering Tony-winning dancer and singer, dies at 91

By **MARK KENNEDY**

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Chita Rivera, the dynamic dancer, singer and actress who garnered 10 Tony nominations, winning twice, in a long Broadway career that forged a path for Latina artists and shrugged off a near-fatal car accident, died Tuesday. She was 91. Rivera's death was announced by her daughter, Lisa Mordente, who said she died in New York after a brief illness.

Rivera first gained wide notice in 1957 as Anita in the original production of "West Side Story" and was still dancing on Broadway with her trademark energy a half-century later in 2015's "The Visit."

"I wouldn't know what to do if I wasn't moving or telling a story to you or singing a song," she told The Associated Press then. "That's the spirit of my life, and I'm really so lucky to be able to do what I love, even at this time in my life."

In August 2009, Rivera was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor the U.S. can give a civilian. Rivera put her hand over her heart and shook her head in wonderment as President Barack Obama presented the medal. In 2013, she was the marshal at the Puerto Rican Day Parade in New York City.

"She was a true Broadway legend," playwright Paul Rudnick said on X, formerly Twitter. "She always delivered and audiences adored her. The moment she stepped onstage, the world became more exciting and glorious."

Rivera rose from chorus girl to star, collaborating along the way with many of Broadway's greatest talents, including Jerome Robbins, Leonard Bernstein, Bob Fosse, Gower Champion, Michael Kidd, Harold Prince, Jack Cole, Peter Gennaro and John Kander and Fred Ebb.

She rebounded from a car accident in 1988 that



Chita Rivera arrives at the 72nd annual Tony Awards at Radio City Music Hall on Sunday, June 10, 2018, in New York.

Associated Press

crushed her right leg and became an indefatigable star on the road. She was on Broadway in a raucous production of "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" in 2012 and the chilly "The Visit" in 2014, earning another best actress Tony nomination.

"She can't rehearse except for full-out," said playwright Terrence McNally in 2005. "She can't perform except for full-out, no matter what the size of the house. She's going to be there 101% for that audience."

She won Tonys for "The Rink" in 1984 and "Kiss of the Spider Woman" in 1993. When accepting a Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2018, she said "I wouldn't trade my life in the theater for anything, because theater is life."

She was nominated for the award seven other times, for "Bye Bye Birdie," which opened in 1960; "Chicago," 1975; "Bring Back Birdie," 1981; "Merlin," 1983; "Jerry's Girls," 1985; "Nine," 2003; and "Chita Rivera: The Dancer's Life," 2005.

"I don't think we have enough original musicals," she told The Associated Press in 2012. "I know I'm being old fashioned, but the theater is the place where music, lyrics, words, scenery

and stories come together. And I've been blessed enough to have done several shows when they really did. They take you places and they're daring. That's what we need."

Her albums include 16 tracks pulled from her original cast recordings and put out as part of Sony's Legends of Broadway series and two solo CDs "And Now I Sing" for a tiny record label in the 1960s and "And Now I Swing" in 2009 for Yellow Sound Label.

In the 1993 musical "Kiss of the Spider Woman," Rivera played the title role, a glamorous movie star at the center of the fantasy life of an inmate in a South American prison. The story, from a novel by Manuel Puig, had already been made into an Oscar-winning 1985 movie.

In his review, then-Associated Press drama critic Michael Kuchwara wrote that Rivera "is more than a musical theater star. She's a force of nature which is exactly what is needed for the role of the Spider Woman. With her Louise Brooks haircut, brassy voice and lithe dancer's body, Rivera dominates the stage whenever she appears."

In 1975, she originated

the role of Velma Kelly (to Gwen Verdon's Roxie Hart) in the original Broadway production of "Chicago." Rivera had a small role in the 2002 film version, while Catherine Zeta-Jones won the best supporting actress Oscar as Velma just as Rita Moreno had picked up an Oscar for her portrayal of Anita in "West Side Story." The songwriters for "Chicago," Kander and Ebb, also wrote Rivera's first Tony-winning performance, for "The Rink." In winning the Tony for best actress in a musical, Rivera topped the show's top star, Liza Minnelli, who also had been nominated. The two played a mother and daughter who struggle to rebuild their relationship after a long estrangement; the setting is an old-fashioned roller rink that has seen better days. "Spider Woman" had been her first Broadway show since 1986, when she suffered a broken leg in the traffic accident while she was appearing in "Jerry's Girls," a Broadway tribute to the songs of Jerry Herman.

At the Tony awards a few weeks later, she flashed her cast and belted out "Put on a Happy Face" from the musical "Bye, Bye, Birdie."

It took months of physical therapy to bring back her dancing skills. She told The Associated Press: "It never entered my mind that I wouldn't dance again. Never. I can't explain to you why. It's hard work getting back but that's what I'm doing."

"My spirit is still there."

Dolores Conchita Figueroa del Rivero was born Jan. 23, 1933, in Washington, D.C. Her Puerto Rican father, Pedro del Rivero, was a musician who played in the United States Navy Band, who died when she was 7. Her mother was Scottish and Italian descent.

She took dance classes and then entered the prestigious School of American Ballet in New York. Her first theater gig, at age 17, was in the touring company of "Call Me Madam." That led to chorus stints in such shows as "Guys and Dolls" and "Can-Can."

In her 2023 memoir, "Chita: A Memoir," another woman steals scene after scene: her self-proclaimed alter ego, Dolores. Unapologetic and fiery, Dolores was the unfiltered version of Chita and served as motivation in times of self-doubt. In one chapter, Rivera writes that she doesn't read reviews "or Dolores just might invest in a dozen voodoo dolls."

"I consist of and I think we all do I consist of two people: Dolores and Conchita," Rivera said in an interview with the AP that year. "Conchita, she's the one that has been taking all the glory, you know. She's been doing all the shows, but Dolores is the one that's pushed her into it. And she's been keeping me on track, so I listen to Dolores. I listen to her. She's growing in my head now as we speak."

Among other early appearances on the New York stage were roles in "The Shoestring Revue," 1955; a 1955 musical version of "Seventh Heaven" starring Ricardo Montalban; and "Mr. Wonderful," a 1956 show starring Sammy Davis Jr. □



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Vladimir Guerrero Jr. looking forward to setting arbitration record win or lose

By IAN HARRISON
Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Although he's never gone through the process before, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. doesn't seem too unsettled about the possibility of his 2024 salary being decided by a three-person arbitration panel.

That's probably because whether Guerrero wins or loses, the Blue Jays slugger stands to set a record for the highest salary ever awarded in arbitration.

Guerrero has asked for \$19.9 million and been offered \$18.05 million, meaning he's guaranteed to top the \$14 million former Toronto teammate Teoscar Hernández received from Seattle after Hernández lost his hearing last year.

"I feel very happy," Guerrero said through a translator



Toronto Blue Jays' Vladimir Guerrero Jr. celebrates his two-run home run against the Texas Rangers during the first inning of a baseball game Thursday, Sept. 14, 2023, in Toronto.

Associated Press

in an interview to promote his appearance on the

cover of the 2024 edition of the video game MLB The

Show.

"I feel even more happy

because he's my good friend, and now I can give him a hard time about it," Guerrero said.

Guerrero and Hernández were Blue Jays teammates for four seasons, reaching the playoffs together in 2020 and 2022.

A three-time All-Star and the reigning Home Run Derby champion, Guerrero said he's made some minor mechanical adjustments to his swing this offseason after a second straight year of declining productivity. He set career-highs with 48 home runs and 111 RBIs in 2021, then followed up with 32 homers and 97 RBIs in 2022. Guerrero had 26 homers and 94 last season.

"I improved my mechanics to have as little movement as possible," Guerrero said. "To the naked eye, you might not even notice. □ I

Eighteen current WNBA players on Athletes Unlimited rosters this season

By DOUG FEINBERG
AP Basketball Writer

The WNBA and its players are once again a big part of the Athletes Unlimited basketball season.

Eighteen players in the 40-person league finished last season on a WNBA roster while 11 others, including two-time Olympic champion Angel McCoughtry, have experience in the league.

There has been a growth in the amount of WNBA players competing in the four-week league from its inception in 2022. Originally 34% had some WNBA ties with that number increasing to 72.5% this year.

With less options to play

overseas because of the situation in Israel, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and the WNBA's prioritization of the rule that requires players to be in training camp or not be able to play in the upcoming season, AU has become a more attractive option. Most of the games in the league will be available to watch for free on the WNBA App. It's a second year of a collaboration between the two leagues. "The WNBA is thrilled to collaborate with Athletes Unlimited Pro Basketball for a second consecutive season, unlocking access to more women's basketball for fans across the globe," said WNBA Chief Growth

Officer Colie Edison. "We are proud to have the WNBA App serve as the free, live streaming partner of AU Pro Basketball."

Current WNBA players competing this season include: Laeticia Amihere (Atlanta Dream); Kierstan Bell (Las Vegas Aces); Kalani Brown (Dallas Wings); Lexie Brown (Los Angeles Sparks); Rae Burrell (Los Angeles Sparks); Natasha Cloud (Washington Mystics); Sydney Colson (Las Vegas Aces); Zia Cooke (Los Angeles Sparks); Allisha Gray (Atlanta Dream); Isabelle Harrison (Chicago Sky); Ruthy Hebard (Chicago Sky); Lexie Hull (Indiana Fever); Haley Jones

(Atlanta Dream); Kelsey Mitchell (Indiana Fever); Tiffany Mitchell (Minnesota Lynx); Maddy Siegrist (Dal-

las Wings); Odyssey Sims (Dallas Wings) and Evina Westbrook (Los Angeles Sparks). □



Las Vegas Aces' Sydney Colson (51) plays during the second half in Game 4 of a WNBA basketball final playoff series against the New York Liberty Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023, in New York.

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Taking it easy: The Chiefs are back in the Super Bowl because of a simplified offensive approach

By **DAVE SKRETTA**

AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) —

There was a moment back on Christmas Day, long before the Kansas City Chiefs could even start thinking about playing in the Super Bowl again, when Patrick Mahomes broke the huddle in a game against the Las Vegas Raiders.

His team was in total disarray. Players were coming off the sideline, then racing back, only to turn around and rush back onto the field. Nobody knew where to line up. And all the while, the play clock was quickly clicking down to zero.

That moment may have changed the course of the entire season for Kansas City.

In the midst of that deflating loss to the Raiders, their fifth in eight games, Chiefs coach Andy Reid and his offensive brain trust came to the realization that their famously complex offense had grown well, too complex. There were too formations. Too many motions. Too many route concepts. In fact, there were too many words, often more than 15 to spit out a single play.

So the Chiefs simplified everything. And they haven't lost since.

While their offense still may not be the juggernaut that carried the Chiefs to three previous Super Bowls in four years, it has at least become efficient, and that's all it needed to be alongside the league's No. 2 defense. The Chiefs gained more than 400 yards in a wild-card win over Miami, or more than 100 than they did that day against Las Vegas, and put up enough



Kansas City Chiefs head coach Andy Reid gestures as he walks off the field after defeating the Baltimore Ravens in the AFC Championship NFL football game, Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024, in Baltimore.

points against the Bills and Ravens on the road to earn a spot opposite the San Francisco 49ers on Feb. 11 in Las Vegas, of all places.

"When you see some of the things that happened on tape, like that game where we had trouble getting in and out of the huddle, whether it's personnel or what we have in the play call I think it is a combination of all that," Chiefs offensive coordinator Matt Nagy said. "So sometimes that stuff makes you look back and think, 'What can we do different to help these guys out?'"

In some ways, the decision to pare back everything goes against common sense.

Shouldn't an offense that is more complex be more difficult to defend?

It also seemed to go against the instincts of both Reid and Mahomes, who relish

designing creative plays and share the same go-for-broke attitude. When rookies show up to training camp each July, they are hit with the entirety of the offensive playbook, and it usually leaves their eyes spinning like slot machines and their brains feeling like mush.

"It's a complex offense. It's hard for young guys to do," Mahomes admitted.

There are unusual formations. A wide range of personnel groups. Lots of shifts and movements, designed to both confuse the defense and provide a tell as to what it might do. There are ghost motions. And even when a wide receiver knows the route he is supposed to run, it could change mid-stride depending on what the secondary is doing.

No wonder the play calls themselves get long-winded.

In fact, former quarterback Alex Smith used to warn his teammates in the huddle that he had "a doozy" so that they could pay attention as he delivered the entire word salad. "There's so much verbiage in this playbook and so much dialogue," Chiefs general manager Brett Veach acknowledged last fall, "and there's so many tweaks to every assignment in regard to where they align and how they look at coverage and how they alter routes. It's super complicated."

Fast forward to Christmas Day. One of the problems the Chiefs had against the Raiders was the time it took to get plays into the game. Reid is usually calling them from the sideline, but it is Nagy whose radio is connected to Mahomes' helmet.

So, those long-winded plays

were repeated four times: from Reid on the sideline to Nagy in the coaches' box, back to Mahomes on the field, and one last time to the rest of the team in the huddle. By the time they broke it and got to the line of scrimmage, there were just a few seconds left on the play clock and the Chiefs were rushing to get the snap off.

By simplifying things, the Chiefs have gotten to the line of scrimmage in the playoffs with 15 or 20 seconds on the clock, and that has given Mahomes time to survey the defense, change protections or audible to an entirely different play if necessary.

"Nobody took offense to any of it," Nagy said. "We said, 'How can we get better?' And we started with that."

There's a lot of other things that go into it, with execution and play design and everything, but put it all together and see what happens."

What happened was back-to-back wins to clinch the AFC West and the No. 3 seed in the playoffs. And three more wins there, including the past two on the road the first road playoff games of Mahomes' career when the decibel level inside the opposing stadium should make communication for an offense even more challenging.

"I don't like losing any games, so every loss I feel like is tough," Mahomes said, "but we always had everything we wanted in front of us, and we had that mindset, and Coach Reid preaches that every day we come into the building. No one hung their head. □"

Associated Press