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## BREAKING NEWS: XXXXXXX XXXXX XXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXX XXXXXXX XXXXXX XXXX XXXX XXXXXXX

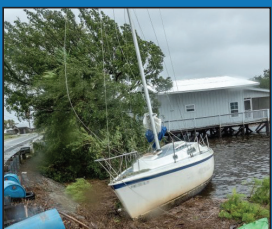
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# SHOOTER KILLS 3 BLACK PEOPLE AT JACKSONVILLE DOLLAR GENERAL, SHERIFF SAYS KILLING WAS RACIALLY MOTIVATED

Joe Fisher

Aug. 27 (UPI) -- A shooting at a Dollar General in Jacksonville, Fla., that killed three people Saturday is being investigated by the FBI as a potential hate crime.

Jacksonville County Sheriff T.K. Waters identified the shooter as 21-year-old Ryan Christopher Palmeto of Orange Park, Fla., during a press conference on Sunday. The victims were also identified as 52-year-old Angela Michelle Carr, 19-year-old Anolt Joseph "A.J." Laguerre Jr. and 29-year-old Jarrald De'Shaun Gallion.

All three victims were Black and the shooter had written manifestos to his parents, the media and federal officials detailing his desire to kill Black people.

The manifestos described the suspect's "disgusting ideology of hate," according to Waters.

The alleged shooter was on campus at Edward Waters University earlier in the day.

Campus security asked him to leave after he refused to identify himself, according to the school -- a historically Black university, or HBCU.

A short time later the Palmeto allegedly donned a tactical vest, gloves and a mask while still on campus, before opening fire at the nearby Dollar General. He first opened fire on a vehicle outside of the store, killing Carr. He then entered the store and killed Laguerre and Gallion. He then chased a female around the store but did not shoot her.

At some point within 10 minutes of the first shots, Palmeto texted his father and told him to use a screwdriver to get into his room. There he found Palmeto's last will and testament, according to Waters.

He was armed with a Glock and an AR15-style rifle, according to the sheriff. One of the firearms was marked with a swastika. The sheriff's office released photos of the firearms on Facebook.

"Plainly put, this shooting was racially motivated. He hated Black people," Waters said. "This is a dark day in Jacksonville's history. Any loss of life is tragic, but the hate that motivated the shooter's killing spree adds an additional layer of heartbreak."

See SHOOTER, page X

Jacksonville Sheriff's Office



Ryan Christopher Palmeto

Ryan Christopher Palmeto, 21 of Orange Park, Fla., allegedly killed three people in a shooting at a Jacksonville, Fla., Dollar General on Saturday. Palmeto's victims were all Black and investigators say the shooting was racially motivated. Image courtesy of the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office/Facebook.

## A large crowd attended the March on Washington to rally for equality and justice.

ROGER JOHNSON  
Staff Writer

The Daily Drum Women of Justice were in full effect at the recently held 60th Anniversary, as the March on Washington promoted the National Action Network heralded by Rev. Al Sharpton. A large crowd attended the Washington rally for equality and justice at the Eclipse in Washington D.C. this weekend. Rev. Al Sharpton was joined by a host of "Who's

Who in Civil Rights", from Martin Luther King III, Dr. Mark Moriel, and host of civil rights activist groups; ranging from the CNBC (Conference National Black Churches) advocating for the cancellation of student debt, the Alpha's of Howard's HBCU campus, LGBTQ human rights activists and many other HBCU's around the globe.

Unfortunately, the national event was marred by the tragic shooting of three black people in Jacksonville, Fla. in a department store while they shopped for school



supplies near the opening of this year's first day of school. At print time, the Daily Drum had no new

A large crowd attended the March on Washington to rally for equality and justice. Image courtesy of the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office/Facebook.

details and elected to wait for further developments before adding more, in respect for the families.

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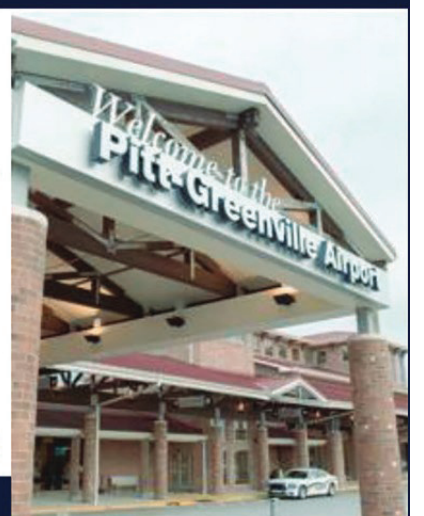
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# OPINION

## New theory suggests universe is twice as old as previously believed

By Rajendra Gupta  
University of Ottawa

Early universe observations by the James Webb Space Telescope cannot be explained by current cosmological models. These models estimate the universe to be 13.8 billion years in age, based on the big-bang expanding universe concept.

My research proposes a model that determines the universe's age to be 26.7 billion years, which accounts for the JWST's "impossible early galaxy" observations.

Impossible early galaxies refer to the fact that some galaxies dating to the cosmic dawn -- 500 to 800 million years after the big bang -- have discs and bulges similar to those that have passed through a long period of evolution. And smaller in size galaxies are apparently more massive than larger ones, which is quite the opposite of expectation.

### Frequency and distance

This age estimate is derived from the universe's expansion rate by measuring the redshift of spectral lines in the light emitted by distant galaxies. An earlier explanation of the redshift was based on the hypothesis that light loses energy as it travels cosmic distances. This "tired light" explanation was rejected as it could not explain many observations.

The redshift of light is similar to the Doppler effect on sound: Noises appear to have higher frequency (pitch) when approaching, and lower when receding. Redshift, a lower light frequency, indicates when an object is receding from us; the larger the galaxy distance, the higher the recession speed and redshift.

An alternative explanation for the redshift was due to the Doppler effect: Distant galaxies are receding from us at speeds proportional to their distance, indicating that the universe is expanding. The expanding universe model became favored by most astronomers after two astronomers working for Bell Labs, Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson, accidentally discovered cosmic microwave background radiation in 1964, which the steady-state model could not satisfactorily explain.

The rate of expansion essentially determines the age of the universe. Until the launch of the Hubble Space Telescope in the 1990s, uncertainty in the expansion rate estimated the universe's age ranging from 7 billion to 20 billion years. Other observations led to the accepted value of 13.8 billion years, putting the big-bang model on the cosmology pedestal.

### Limitations of previous models

Research published last year proposed to resolve the impossible early galaxy problem using the tired light model. However, tired light cannot satisfactorily explain other cosmological observations like supernovae redshifts and uniformity of the cosmic microwave background.

I attempted to combine the standard big-bang model with the tired light model to see how it fits the supernovae data and the JWST data, but it did not fit the latter well. It did, however, increase the universe's age to 19.3 billion years.

Next, I tried creating a hybrid model comprising the tired light and a cosmological model I had developed based on the evolving coupling constants proposed by British physicist Paul Dirac in 1937. This fitted both the data well, but almost doubled the universe's age.

The new model stretches galaxy formation time 10- to 20-fold over the standard model, giving enough time for the formation of well-evolved "impossible" early galaxies as observed.

## The Washington Post Is Clueless

A front-page story on Aug. 21 in The Washington Post sounds a false alarm: "American democracy is cracking. These forces help explain why," by Dan Balz and Clara Ence Morse.

The analysis is incoherent, betrays constitutional ignorance and misunderstands the purpose of government -- not majority rule but justice secured through checks and balances and separation of powers, enabling every person an opportunity to march to their own drummer, fearless of domestic predation or foreign aggression. The glory of the United States is liberty, not a Leviathan administrative state that dulls ambition and protects corporate behemoths by agency regulations navigable only by \$2,000-per-hour elite lawyers.

The United States, of course, is not perfect. Mankind is made of crooked timber. But it is adorned with the optimal form of government to secure justice than any other on the face of the earth. Just ask the millions of immigrants yearly who risk life and limb to enter the United States in search of opportunity and freedom.

The soundtrack of The Washington Post's fault-finding is the Constitution's checks on majority rule. Why these checks should be scorned is difficult to apprehend. Thomas Jefferson observed, "An elective despotism was not the government we

fought for; but one which should not only be founded on free principles, but in which the powers of government should be so divided and balanced among several bodies of magistracy, as that no one could transcend their legal limits, without being effectually checked and restrained by the others." James Madison, father of the Constitution, observed in Federalist 55, "Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob." Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson added in *West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette* (1943): "The very purpose of a Bill of Rights was to withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them beyond the reach of majorities and officials and to establish them as legal principles to be applied by the courts. One's right to life, liberty, and property, to free speech, a free press, freedom of worship and assembly, and other fundamental rights may not be submitted to vote; they depend on the outcome of no elections."

In any event, The Washington Post's exaltation of majority rule is insincere. It first castigates the White House, Congress and the Supreme Court for not echoing the majority. But then excoriates state legislatures that do! It deplores the fact that in numerous states, the "dominant party has been able to move aggressively to enact its governing priorities." Janus-faced, thy name is The Washington Post.

The newspaper deplores the supermajority required to amend the Constitution to foster stability (two-thirds majorities in the House and three-fourths of the state legislatures). Is The Washington Post afflicted with amnesia? Has it forgotten the 18-year-old voting rights amendment (26th Amendment) ratified on July 1, 1971, within four months of its submission? Reporters Balz and Morse applaud the easy changeability of state constitutions: "Over the history of the country, state constitutions have been amended thousands of times." But unlike the United States Constitution, no state constitution has served as a template for constitutions fashioned by foreign countries. No state constitution has earned the accolade the U.S. Constitution elicited from British icon and statesman Lord Gladstone: "the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man."

Contrary to The Washington Post, the Constitution is our deliverance from the nation's afflictions. Its abandonment has begotten our cosseted multitrillion-dollar military-industrial warfare state that has spiked the national debt past a crushing \$32 trillion pursuing fool's errands in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Somalia and Ukraine. It has begotten a surveillance state demolishing the Fourth Amendment right to be let alone from government snooping absent probable cause that crime is afoot. It has begotten a cycloptic administrative state that daily pours forth regulations to stifle individual ingenuity and to shield corporate giants from competition. Congress routinely delegates limitless legislative powers to the president and executive agencies where checks and balances are nonexistent. Executive agencies promulgate an average of 3,000 to 4,500 legislative rules annually -- delegation run riot.

Congress persists in limitless giveaways of its legislative power to escape responsibility for policies that might provoke a primary challenge. A Congress member's heaven is an uncontested election indistinguishable from China or Russia.

The Constitution will be restored only if the American people vote out of office its countless defectors who currently occupy the corridors of power. A beginning would be the restoration of civics as the centerpiece of public education.



ARMSTRONG WILLIAMS

## V-22 Osprey won't be grounded, even after dozens of crashes, 54 fatalities

By Peter Layton  
Griffith University

At the weekend, a V-22 Osprey aircraft crashed on Melville Island north of Darwin in Australia. Of the 23 U.S. Marine Corps personnel onboard, three died, five were taken to Darwin hospital in a serious condition, and some others had more minor injuries.

The craft was part of the Marine Rotational Force -- Darwin, a unit of up to 2,500 U.S. Marines that has been based in the Northern Territory from April to October each year since 2012. This is the most serious accident in that 11-year period.

The Osprey is a relatively new type of aircraft, with a patchy track record for safety. But the advantages it offers for the military -- and perhaps for civilians -- mean we will only be seeing more of it in the future.

### About the V-22 Osprey

The Osprey has long been controversial, initially for its high cost and long development time, and in recent years for safety concerns.

These issues reflect the revolutionary design of the craft: It is a kind of plane-helicopter hybrid called a tiltrotor, which means the wing tilts upward for takeoff and landing and back down again for level flight. If this sounds complex, it is.

The Osprey is at the leading edge of aviation technology, with nothing else in operational service like it. The aircraft was built to replace helicopters and is used by the U.S. Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps and the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force.

### Why it's useful

The Marine Corps is by far the largest user, being attracted to the aircraft's much longer range, much higher speed and good carrying capacity

compared to conventional helicopters.

The Marine Corps is famous for landing soldiers across beaches during combat but in the modern era this is difficult. Potential adversaries now have excellent beach defenses, and bringing ships close enough to shore to land soldiers via traditional naval landing craft or conventional helicopters is becoming unrealistic.

The Osprey solves this by allowing amphibious ships to remain hundreds of miles at sea and launch assaults onto the beach "from over the horizon." A landing can now surprise an enemy, while the Osprey's range allows many more possible landing sites to be accessed.

The Marines first brought the Osprey into service in 2007, and it has been central to the adoption of a whole new way of war. They have dispensed with heavy mechanized forces like tanks in favor of rapid maneuvers, light vehicles, long-range missile technology and island hopping.

This approach of so-called Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations is the Marine Corps answer to China's growing assertiveness in East Asia and to keeping the Corps relevant in the modern era. The Marines in Darwin now practice EABO.

### Patchy safety record

That's the upside. The downside of being leading-edge technology is having little historical experience of similar aircraft to fall back on.

Every Osprey flight is a learning event for the pilots, the maintenance personnel and the aircraft's manufacturer.

For example, the U.S. Air Force grounded its Ospreys for two weeks last year over worries about gearbox matters. This has been an ongoing problem that seems to get worse the more an aircraft is flown and the gearbox used; technical fixes are in the works.

The central concern is flying safe-

ty and here the Osprey has a mixed record. The aircraft had four crashes and 30 deaths during its initial development.

Since entering operational service in 2007, there have been an additional 10 crashes and 24 deaths.

Two of these 10 were on combat operations where the cause was uncertain. The others were due to pilot error or technical problems.

A fatal crash off Rockhampton in 2017 can be seen in a terrifying video that also shows operating the Osprey is a complicated business.

### Will it get safer?

As the Osprey has flown more, more knowledge has been gained and the accident rate has declined. However, its accidents have tended to come in bunches. In the eight months from December 2016 to September 2017, there were three crashes; in the 18 months from March 2022 to now, there have been another three.

This all compares very unfavorably with American civil aviation, which has a much better safety record. In 2020, a report by the National Commission on Military Aviation Safety said the main culprits for the U.S. military's air accidents were insufficient flying hours to keep aircrew proficient, inadequate personnel training, inconsistent funding for spare parts supply and risky maintenance practices.

The implication is that safety can be improved. It just needs to be properly addressed.

Historically, the safety record of revolutionary aircraft like the Osprey improves as more operating experience is gained and unknown technical problems are found and addressed. That was certainly the Australian experience with the F-111 strike aircraft, which had an early run of crashes followed by many years of safe operation.



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# STUDY: BLACK AMERICANS 3 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE KILLED BY POLICE

Danielle Haynes

June 24 (UPI) -- A four-year analysis released Wednesday shows that black Americans were, on average, more than three times as likely as white people to be killed during a police encounter.

The study by researchers at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health examined 5,494 police-related deaths in the United States between 2013 and 2017 and found disparities across the two racial groups in all metropolitan statistical areas that provided race/ethnicity data.

Among all MSAs, the analysis found, black people were 3.23 times as likely to be killed by police than white people. Among MSAs, researchers said the figures "varied greatly."

At the low end, black deaths in the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, Ga., area were 1.81 times greater than white deaths. That figure rose to 6.51 in the MSA with



Activists protest social inequality and lack of police accountability at a rally Friday in Los Angeles. Thousands nationwide celebrated the date, Juneteenth, which marks the end of slavery in the United States. Photo by Jim Ruymen/UPI | License

the highest level of disparity -- Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, Ill.

MSAs that showed "more extreme" disparities between the number of black and white people killed in police encounters tended to have lower rates of police-related fatalities in

general, according to the analysis.

According to the study, the areas with the highest death rates involving police compared to population were:

-- Anniston-Oxford-Jacksonville, Ala. (1.17 per 100,000)

-- Farmington, N.M. (1.01 per 100,000)

-- Bakersfield, Calif. (1.01 per 100,000)

-- Billings, Mont. (1.01 per 100,000)

-- Pueblo, Colo. (0.95 per 100,000)

-- Oklahoma City (0.93 per 100,000)

-- Albuquerque (0.92 per 100,000)

-- Anchorage, Alaska (0.92 per 100,000)

-- Tulsa, Okla. (0.88 per 100,000)

-- Las Cruces, N.M. (0.86 per 100,000)

The area with the lowest rate of police-involved deaths was Buffalo-Cheektowaga-Niagara Falls, N.Y., which had a rate of 0.13 per 100,000 people.

Overall, the researchers said rates of deadly police violence were higher in the West and South than they were in the Midwest and Northeast.

"People's risk of fatal police violence varies hugely from one metro area to another; some metros have death rates nine times those of other cities, which points to how preventable these deaths are and why so many people are protesting police violence across the country," said study authors Jaquelyn Jahn and Gabriel Schwartz.

"Nationally, black people are at much higher risk of

being killed by the police, but in some places the difference is truly enormous: Black Chicagoans are more than 650 percent more likely to be killed than white Chicagoans."

The researchers used data from Fatal Encounters, an independently validated database that is endorsed by the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics. Of the deaths they examined, they discounted those reported as suicides, accidents or vehicle collisions. Those that lacked race or ethnicity data -- 547 -- were excluded from race-related statistics.

The study, published in PLOS ONE, comes after weeks of protests nationwide spawned by the police-involved death of George Floyd on May 25 in Minneapolis and other police brutality cases around the country. Some activists have called for reducing or entirely cutting funding for police departments, among other proposed reforms.



# Ex-Trump attorney Sidney Powell pleads not guilty in Ga. election interference case

Sheri Walsh

Aug. 29 (UPI) -- Sidney Powell, an attorney who worked on former President Donald Trump's 2020 campaign, waived her right to arraignment and pleaded not guilty Tuesday in Georgia's election interference case.

According to the court filing, Powell waived her right to hear the charges against her before entering a plea. Arraignment for all of the defendants in the election case is scheduled Sept. 6.

Powell, along with Trump and 17 other co-defendants,

was indicted Aug. 14 for an alleged criminal racketeering conspiracy to change the outcome of Georgia's presidential election.

She faces seven charges, including violating Georgia's Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations -- or RICO -- Act.

Powell was charged with conspiracy to commit election fraud, computer crimes, trespass and invasion of privacy, as well as conspiracy to defraud the state. She surrendered at the Fulton County Jail last week and was released on \$100,000 bond.

Powell is one of three de-

fendants to waive their right to an arraignment.

Defendant Trevian Kutti, who is accused of harassing an election worker, also waived arraignment Tuesday and entered a not guilty plea, according to a court filing.

Ray Smith, a Georgia-based lawyer who worked for Trump, waived his arraignment and entered a not guilty plea to 12 counts in the indictment, according to a court filing from Monday.

While Powell is the third defendant to have already entered a plea, she is the second to request a speedy trial.

Attorney Kenneth Chesebro faces an Oct. 23 trial date for allegedly drafting the fake electors memo.

The remaining 16 defendants in the case, including Trump, still face arraignment Sept. 6.

On Monday, U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan set Trump's trial date for March 4, which is the eve of Super Tuesday, when many states hold their 2024 presidential primary elections.

Trump, who is running for the Republican Party's nomination, has argued that all criminal cases against him should be delayed until after the 2024 election.



Sidney Powell, an attorney who worked on former President Donald Trump's 2020 campaign, is pictured in mug shot provided by the Fulton County Sheriff's Office in Atlanta on Aug. 23. Photo via Fulton County Sheriff's Office/UPI | License



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## White House names first 10 drugs eligible for Medicare price negotiations

A.L. Lee

Aug. 29 (UPI) -- The Biden administration on

Tuesday announced the initial slate of 10 prescription medicines chosen as part of the first-ever pricing negotiations between Medicare and the nation's pharmaceutical giants.

The Medicare Drug Price Negotiation Program guide -- released by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services -- comes as President Joe Biden seeks to fulfill a campaign promise to make prescription drugs more affordable for millions of aging Americans.

The drugs on the list "are among the most common and costly prescriptions that treat everything from heart failure, blood clots, diabetes, arthritis, Crohn's disease -- and more," Biden said in a statement announcing the start of the highly anticipated program.

"When implemented, prices on negotiated drugs will decrease for up to 9 million seniors," Biden said, echoing his previous vows to lower prescription drug costs. "These seniors currently pay up to \$6,497 in out-of-pocket costs per year for these prescriptions. In addition, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office reports that this will save taxpayers \$160 billion by reducing how much Medicare pays for drugs through negotiation and inflation rebates."

Biden's program is being funded by the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, which expanded Medicare's authority to negotiate out-of-pocket drug costs, including a \$2 monthly cap on certain generic drugs used to treat chronic conditions, as well as a \$35 price cap on insulin.

When the pricing negotiations wrap up, the new drug prices won't go into effect until 2026 -- more than 28 months from now.

The 10 drugs under consideration in the first round of talks are among the top 50 prescription medications that seniors fill the most at retail pharmacies under Medicare Part D, the White House said.

They are: Eliquis, from Bristol-Myers Squibb, to prevent blood clotting and reduce stroke risk

Jardiance, from Boehringer Ingelheim, to lower blood sugar for people with type 2 diabetes

Xarelto, from Johnson & Johnson, to prevent blood clotting and reduce stroke risk

Januvia, from Merck,



President Joe Biden embraces Steve Hadfield, a North Carolina resident impacted by drug prices, during an event on lowering healthcare costs in the East Room of the White House on Tuesday. Photo by Bonnie Cash/UPI | License Photo.

to lower blood sugar for people with type 2 diabetes

Farxiga, from AstraZeneca, to treat type 2 diabetes

Entresto, from Novartis, to treat heart failure

Enbrel, from Amgen, to treat rheumatoid arthritis

Imbruvica, from Abbvie, to treat various types of blood cancers

Stelara, from Janssen, to treat Crohn's disease

A family of insulin products made by Novo Nordisk to treat diabetes, including Fiasp; Fiasp FlexTouch; Fiasp PenFill; NovoLog; NovoLog FlexPen; and NovoLog PenFill.

In 2022, Medicare Part D enrollees paid a total of \$3.4 billion in out-of-pocket costs for the listed drugs, with the average person paying as much as \$6,497 on prescriptions throughout the year, the White House said.

Drug manufacturers have criticized Biden's plan as detrimental to profits and innovation, while Merck and Johnson & Johnson have filed multiple lawsuits in an effort to declare the plan unconstitutional. Biden said his plan was working to make a difference for struggling Americans while the pharmaceutical industry continued to rake in record profits.

"Let me be clear: I am not backing down," Biden said. "There is no reason why Americans should be forced to pay more than any developed nation for life-saving prescriptions just to pad Big Pharma's pockets."

Biden's plan has also drawn criticism for adding commercial health insurers to a requirement that forces drug companies to pay rebates to Medicare whenever medicine prices rise faster than inflation.

Rebates for drugs administered by physicians under Medicare Part B went into effect on Jan. 1.

In March, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced the first set of prescription drugs that would be subject to the rebates, bringing a lower co-pay to about 27 prescription drugs that saw prices rise sharply in the final quarter of 2022.

By comparison, 1,200 prescription drugs increased their prices faster than inflation throughout 2021 before Biden's policies went into effect.

Biden's plan also allows for free vaccines for Medicare recipients and decreases costs for behavioral and mental health services.

Beginning in 2024, Part D enrollees will no longer pay a 5% co-pay after the maximum benefit is reached, while the out-of-pocket cap drops to \$2,000 in 2025, and 1.9 million enrollees with the highest drug costs will save an average of \$2,500 per year, the White House said.

Medicare recipients will continue to see their prescription drug costs go down as more provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act go into effect in the coming years, the White House said.

Biden's federal budget proposal for 2024 calls for extending Medicare and Social Security and reducing the deficit by raising taxes on wealthy Americans.

The reforms would increase the Medicare tax rate from 3.8% to 5% on those who earn more than \$400,000 per year, which would keep Medicare solvent for the next 25 years, the White House said previously.

### STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION RALEIGH

DOCKET NO. G-9, SUB 831

BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

In the Matter of	)	
Application of Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc., for Annual Review of Gas Costs Pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 62-133.4(c) and Commission Rule R1-17(k)(6)	)	<b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b>

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the North Carolina Utilities Commission has scheduled a public hearing to conduct an annual review of the cost of natural gas supply, storage and transportation for Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc. (Piedmont). The public hearing has been scheduled for Tuesday, October 3, 2023, at 9:00 a.m., in Commission Hearing Room 2115, Dobbs Building, 430 North Salisbury Street, Raleigh, North Carolina. The hearing is being held pursuant to the provisions of N.C. Gen. Stat. § 62-133.4(c) and Commission Rule R1-17(k)(6) for the purpose of comparing Piedmont's prudently-incurred gas costs with costs recovered from all of the utility's customers served during the test period. Public witness testimony will be received in accordance with Commission Rule R1-21(g).

Piedmont filed testimony relating to the subject matter of this hearing on August 1, 2023. Further information may be obtained from the Office of the Chief Clerk, North Carolina Utilities Commission, 430 North Salisbury Street, Raleigh, North Carolina, where a copy of Piedmont's testimony is available for review by the public. Also, documents can be viewed on the Commission's website at www.ncuc.gov.

The Public Staff is authorized by statute to represent consumers in proceedings before the Commission. Correspondence regarding the annual review proceeding and the hearing thereon should be directed to the Public Staff and should include any information which the writer wishes to be considered by the Public Staff in its investigation of the matter. Such statements should be addressed to Mr. Christopher J. Ayers, Executive Director, Public Staff, 4326 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4300.

The Attorney General is also authorized by statute to represent consumers in proceedings before the Commission. Statements to the Attorney General should be addressed to The Honorable Josh Stein, Attorney General, c/o Consumer Protection- Utilities, 9001 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-9001. Written statements may be emailed to utilityAGO@ncdoj.gov.

Written statements are not evidence unless the writers appear at a public hearing and testify concerning the information contained in their written statements.

Persons desiring to intervene in this proceeding as formal parties should file a petition to intervene pursuant to Commission Rules R1-5 and R1-19 on or before Monday, September 18, 2023. Such petitions should be filed with the Chief Clerk of the North Carolina Utilities Commission, 4325 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4300. The direct testimony and exhibits of expert witnesses to be presented by intervenors should also be filed with the Commission on or before Monday, September 18, 2023.

This the 10th day of August, 2023.

NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

Tamika D. Conyers, Deputy Clerk



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# March on Washington, NO JUSTICE NO PEACE!

Staff Writer-Daily Drum

As this group of teens participated in the 60th Anniversary of the March on Washington for Justice and Equality, three people were gunned down while shopping for school supplies for their families. An alleged Neo Nazi with a hate filled manifesto gunned down the individuals in a department store as they prepared for the annual trek back to school. The alleged shooter apparently had a history of mental health issues, but targeted Black people and this shooting appears to be racially motivated as the shooter left behind racist writings. The irony of the planned shooting on the same day as today's youth marching to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the March on Washington is not left unnoticed. The shooter, who was white, wearing a tactical vest, had offered several manifestos' that highlighted



ROGER JOHNSON.

the shooter's hatred for Black people. He sent them to his parents, the media and local authorities who deemed the manifesto dis-

gusting. The shooter was seen around Edward Waters University which is a small HBCU. The students and faculty were warned

to shelter in place. The shooter then took the easy way out and succumbed to a self-inflicted wound. Yes, he took his own life!

## Shooter

continued from page 1

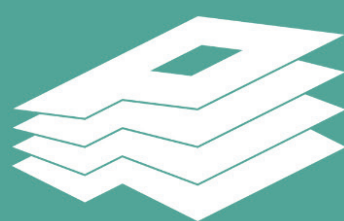
Law enforcement located Palmeto and he killed himself.

Waters added that there is no indication the alleged shooter was part of any group and the shooting is not believed to be related to other incidents across the country.

The alleged shooter lived with his parents. Waters was unsure who the firearms were stored but said they did not belong to the shooter's parents and they did not want them in their home.

Earlier in the afternoon, the shooter contacted his parents and told them to check their computer, where they found the manifesto. They contacted the Clay County police, who then contacted law enforcement in Jacksonville. By that time, the shooting had begun.

"This is a community that has suffered again and again. So many times this is where we end up," Mayor Donna Deegan said. "It's too often the same folks. This type of hate, you see the swastikas on the gun, we must do everything we can to dissuade this type of hate."



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# BIDEN ENCOURAGES OFFICIALS TO 'REMAIN VIGILANT' AS HURRICANE IDALIA BEARS DOWN ON EAST COAST

Clyde Hughes & Adam Schrader

Aug. 30 (UPI) -- President Joe Biden encouraged officials across the south to "remain vigilant" as Hurricane Idalia took aim at the U.S. southeastern coastal region.

The storm was being blamed for at least two deaths in Florida on Wednesday as Georgia and South Carolina prepared for its arrival.

"I don't think anyone can deny the impact of the climate crisis anymore. Just look around. Historic floods," Biden said in a speech, which also addressed the devastation from wildfires in Hawaii.

"I mean, historic floods, more intense droughts, extreme heat, significant wildfires that cause significant damage like we've never seen before, not only through the Hawaiian Islands but in Canada and other parts of the world."

Biden added that he "made a point" to speak to all the governors most likely to be impacted by this storm.

"I spoke with Gov. [Ron] DeSantis several times," Biden said, adding that he also spoke with governors Brian Kemp of Georgia, Roy Cooper of North Carolina and Henry McMaster of South Carolina.

Biden said that, though the storm had downgrad-



A boat is stranded near a road in the town of Jena on Wednesday after Hurricane Idalia made landfall near Keaton Beach, Fla., earlier in the day. Photo by Cristobal Herrera-Ulashkevich/EPA-EFE

ed to a Category 1, he called it "very dangerous" with winds up to 75 mph.

"The impacts of the storm are being felt throughout the southeast, even as it moves up the eastern coast of the United States," he said. "We have to remain vigilant."

Biden said he met with Deanne Criswell, the administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, in the Oval Office.

The president said that he approved an early request from DeSantis for federal assistance on Monday before the hurricane even made landfall.

At least 1,500 emergency personnel and 900 Coast Guard personnel were directed to aid Florida and the southeast, Biden said.

At least two people have died in weather-related accidents in Florida as Hurricane Idalia bat-

tered the state Wednesday, officials said.

An unidentified man from Gainesville was driving his Toyota pickup truck around 6 a.m. when he swerved and veered into a ditch, according to a crash report obtained by CNN. He was 59.

The second incident, which occurred about 15 minutes later, involved a 40-year-old man from Spring Hill who was driving a pickup truck down

St. Joe Road in Pasco County at a speed "too fast for conditions."

He reportedly "lost control," according to the highway patrol.

Hurricane Idalia blew into Florida's Big Bend region Wednesday morning as a powerful Category 3 storm, with the higher populated areas of Tallahassee and Tampa missing the worst of it.

Still, Casey DeSantis, the wife of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, said in a statement that a 100-year-old oak tree fell onto the governor's mansion in Tallahassee while she and their three children were home.

"A difference of 35 to 40 miles made all the difference between hurricane-force winds and significant damage in Leon County and what we're experiencing today," Kelly Godsey, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service, told the Tallahassee Democrat.

"And so we were that close. Unfortunately, that made it much worse for our neighbors to the east."

Tallahassee experienced widespread power outages Wednesday morning and utility crews now are working to restore power. By Wednesday afternoon, 275,407 customers remained without power, according to the tracker Power-outage.us.

North of the Sunshine State, Georgia is now bracing for the worst of the storm, according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Widespread wind damage could particularly affect the area around Valdosta and Moody Air Force Base.

More than 61,000 people in the Peach State remained without power Wednesday as high winds, reaching sustained speeds of 85 mph, toppled trees and downed power lines.

Also, parts of the major I-75 interstate highway were closed due to downed power lines, further complicating travel in parts of the state.

The storm is expected to weaken into a Category 1 hurricane when it reaches the city of Savannah around Wednesday night.

North of Georgia, emergency officials in South Carolina now are warning residents to remain indoors for the next 24 hours, NBC News reported.

"We're about to start receiving tropical storm force winds within the county," Joe Coates, the Charleston County emergency management director, told NBC News.

The storm surge is expected to mix with the seasonal and already high "King Tides" to cause tides to rise to 8.3 feet, Coates said.

The eye of Idalia crossed Keaton Beach, Fla. just before 8 a.m. EDT on Wednesday, bringing with it winds and rain not seen in the area for at least a decade.

The storm reached Category 4 status with winds up to 131 mph before hitting land, but weakened slightly to land officially as a Category 3.

Even with that, Idalia pummeled that area and a large swath of Florida's west coast with torrential rain, flooding and widespread power outages.

In a news conference, DeSantis had said forecasters were predicting that the storm surge would reach about 16 feet in affected areas. He urged residents to take extra precautions.

Meteorologists said Idalia's powerful storm surge could extend some 200 miles along Florida's west coast, well beyond the eye of the storm.

"Do not go outside in the midst of this storm," DeSantis warned.

"If it's calm where you are, maybe because you're in the eye of this storm. Those conditions will change very, very quickly. Wherever you are, hunker down and don't take anything for granted."

DeSantis, who said his power lost briefly during his news conference in Tallahassee, said the meteorologists had issued 11 tornado warnings and those will likely continue throughout the day connected with the outer bands of the storm.

"As the storm passes, do not drive through flooded streets, and assume that all downed power lines are still hot and live," the governor said. "We have a lot of people trying to remedy that, but that is very hazardous in the immediate aftermath of the storm."

Storm surge spilled Tampa Bay into the region's most populous areas of Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater, flooding streets and spurring rescues performed by emergency crews even before Idalia made landfall.

Forecasters predicted the Tampa Bay area to receive 3 to 5 inches of rain.

Idalia was connected to flight cancellations and delays around the country with 790 flights into, or out of the United States canceled and 523 delayed.

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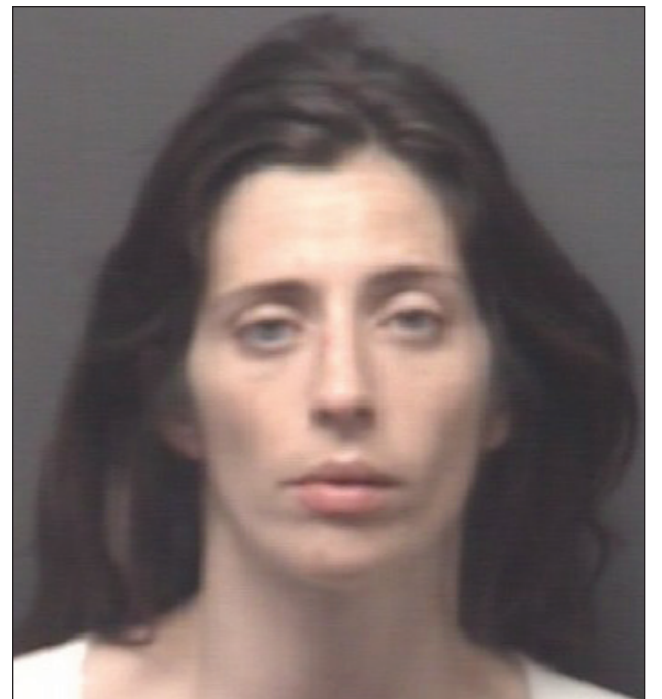
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# RAYS THRIVE DESPITE SHORTSTOP WANDER FRANCO'S IMPOSED LEAVE, MLB INVESTIGATION

Alex Butler

MIAMI, Aug. 30 (UPI) -- Tampa Bay Rays players say they aren't worried about when All-Star Wander Franco can return from an MLB-mandated hiatus, refusing to let what one describes as a "weird situation" drain energy amid a torrid run to the playoffs.

That return is no certainty for the 22-year-old shortstop, amid investigations by MLB and Dominican Republic authorities after allegations spread that he had inappropriate relationships with underage girls.

"We don't know anything," second baseman Brandon Lowe told UPI before the Rays beat the Marlins 11-2 on Tuesday in Miami.

"We haven't heard any updates. We know nothing," Lowe said. "What are you going to take for truth? What someone says on Twitter versus what's actually happening? It's a very weird situation that none of us have been in before."

MLB placed Franco on administrative leave Aug. 22. When or whether the Bani, Dominican Republic, native, will return is uncertain. He has denied the allegations.

Some players in the Rays clubhouse refused to comment or gave elusive responses when asked if they remain in contact or have been asked to stop communications with the embattled shortstop.

The 2023 All-Star hit .281 with 17 home runs, 30 steals and 58 RBIs through his first 112 games. He was on pace to hit more than 20 homers and steal more than 40 bases.

But his loss interestingly, has not been felt on the



Tampa Bay Rays shortstop Wander Franco (5) hasn't played since Aug. 12 as MLB and Dominican Republic authorities investigate him on allegations that he had inappropriate relationships with minors. **File Photo by Steven J. Nesius/UPI | License**

playing field or the standings.

The Rays, who sit in second place in the American League East, were 11-13 in a 24-game stretch before removing Franco from the lineup Aug. 13.

They are 10-4 since, including wins in eight of their last 10 games. They have a three-game winning streak and end their series with the Miami Marlins on Wednesday evening.

The Rays' +183 run differential, 194 home runs and 138 stolen bases are best in the American League. They've allowed the second-fewest hits and runs in the league, and MLB batters are hitting a league-worst .232 against Rays pitchers.

Tampa Bay's '93 RBIs since Franco left the lineup are tied for the most in baseball over any team's

last 14 games. Their .306 average and 155 hits over that span rank second and third in MLB.

Clearly, whatever impact Franco's departure, either temporary or permanent, does not weigh heavily on his teammates.

"Why worry about it? Why let energy get drained into an area that I can't control?" Lowe said in the clubhouse at loanDepot park.

"We know the guys we have here. Obviously, we hope that everything works out for the best, but I can't go out and change anything that's going to happen. I can't make him come back. I can't make it all go away. I can't focus on that. We need to focus on what we can do between the lines."

Tampa Bay Rays infielder Wander Franco, who signed a \$182 million contract

extension in 2021, is on administrative leave and has no set timetable to resume his MLB career. **File Photo by Steve Nesius/UPI**

Rays players said strong leadership, especially from manager Kevin Cash, infielder Yandy Diaz and pitchers Zach Eflin and Jake Diekmann helped bolster their record (81-52), despite losing their young star.

Eflin said the leaders stress bonding, like team dinners or hanging out in hotel rooms during road trips.

"When it's such a big guy like Wander, everybody has to rally around each other," Eflin said. "We've been doing it all year with the starters that we've lost. To go on a deep run in October, everybody's got to be on the same page. It's really important to stress that."

Rays outfielder Luke Raley said Cash's honesty and simplistic strategy have been part of that leadership. And the rest of the team has a positive attitude.

"Whoever is here is here," Raley said. "We trust the 26 guys there in the clubhouse, and we're gonna back one another and do the little things we have to do to win games."

The emergence of Osleivis Basabe, who was called up to replace Franco at the start of his absence, also helps the Rays. The team's No. 6 prospect is hitting .279 (12 for 43), including his first home run (a grand slam) in 13 games since his Aug. 13 debut.

"The credit does need to go to Osabe because he's filled in in a tight spot and in a weird situation that a lot of guys don't want for

their their debut and their call up," Lowe said. "He's handled it seamlessly."

Outfielder Josh Lowe, who joined the Rays in 2016 and was promoted to the big leagues in 2021, said the Franco's absence has allowed the franchise to showcase its "deep farm system."

"It's pretty cool to see the younger guys come up and filling roles that they probably didn't expect to have out there and be successful," Lowe said.

Cash said veteran players and team leadership's willingness to play alongside the young players is key in the hot streak.

"We've got a lot of good teammates out there," Cash said. "They are doing things to kind of embrace the younger guys, whether it's Basabe or [outfielder] Vidal Brujan or like a guy like Aaron Civale, who just came over [in a trade]. I think, to a man, they've been really supportive of each other."

The second-place Rays are 2 1/2 games behind the Orioles (82-49) in the American League East. They have a 5 1/2-game lead in the wild card standings that are used to determine playoff participation.

"We're winning series, which is the most important thing," Rays outfielder Randy Arozarena said. "We want to play in October, so we just keep on going with the same victories. Everyone's focused and we just gotta keep working hard."

The media office for the attorney general of the Dominican Republic, which confirmed its investigation into Franco earlier this month, did not respond when asked for an update on its status.

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# Minnesota Vikings to sign ex-Miami Dolphins running back Myles Gaskin

Alex Butler

Aug. 30 (UPI) -- The Minnesota Vikings will sign former Miami Dolphins running back Myles Gaskin to their active roster, his agency, Rosenhaus Sports Representation, confirmed Wednesday morning.

The Dolphins released Gaskin on Tuesday. The four-year veteran totaled 2,056 yards from scrimmage and 13 touchdowns in 38 games with Miami.

Gaskin, 26, entered the league as a seventh-round pick in the 2019 NFL Draft. He totaled a career-high 972 yards from scrimmage in 2020 and 846 yards from scrimmage in 2021. Gaskin logged just 14 touches for 54 yards in four games last season.

He will reunite with former Dolphins head coach Brian Flores, who serves



Running back Myles Gaskin (R) spent the last four seasons with the Miami Dolphins. **File Photo by Joe Marino/UPI | License Photo.**

as the Vikings' defensive coordinator.

Gaskin is expected to be a depth option behind Vikings starting running back Alexander Mattison. Ty Chandler and Kene

Nwangwu are the other running backs on the Vikings roster.

The Vikings waived running back DeWayne McBride, a seventh-round pick in the 2023 NFL Draft, as

part of Tuesday's wave of roster cuts.

The Vikings will host the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in their season opener at 1 p.m. EDT Sept. 10 in Minneapolis.



Defensive end Boogie Basham (55) spent two seasons with the Buffalo Bills. **File Photo by David Tulis/UPI | License Photo**

# U.S. Open tennis: Potential Gauff-Swiatek, Paul-Tiafoe QFs highlight draw

Alex Butler

Aug. 28 (UPI) -- Iga Swiatek could be in line for a rematch with Coco Gauff in the 2023 U.S. Open quarterfinals, according to Thursday's draw. Americans Frances Tiafoe and Tommy Paul also could meet in the same round at the Grand Slam event.

Main-draw play for the final Grand Slam of the season will start Monday in Flushing, N.Y. A total of 256 players will play in the men's and women's singles circuits of the hard-court tournament.

The winner of each circuit will take home \$3 million. The U.S. Open will air on ESPN, ESPN2, ESPN3, ESPN Deportes and ABC.

Serbian Novak Djokovic, the No. 2 player in the ATP rankings, is a slight favorite over defending champion and World No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz of Spain to win the men's title. Swiatek, the top women's player, is expected to repeat as champion.

No. 3 Daniil Medvedev of Russia, No. 6 Jannik Sinner of Italy and No. 12 Alexander Zverev of Germany are among the other men's favorites.

No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus, No. 4 Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan, Gauff (No. 6) and fellow American Jessica Pegula (No. 3) are the other expected contenders for the women's singles crown.

Alcaraz will face No. 78 Dominik Koepfer of Germany in the first round. The Spaniard shares a quadrant of the draw with Sinner and Zverev and could meet either player



Coco Gauff practices in Arthur Ashe Stadium at the 2023 US Open Tennis Championships at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in Flushing, N.Y., on Friday. **Photo by John Angelillo/UPI | License Photo**

in the quarterfinals. Medvedev and fellow Russians No. 11 Karen Khachanov and No. 8 Andrey Rublev are among the top players Alcaraz could meet in the semifinals.

Djokovic will play No. 85 Alexandre Muller of France in the first round. No. 7 Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece and No. 9 Taylor Fritz of the United States are the top players Djokovic could face in the quarterfinals.

No. 4 Holger Rune of Denmark, No. 5 Casper Ruud of Norway, Paul and Tiafoe could meet Djokovic in the semifinals. Paul, ranked No. 14, will face a qualifier in the first round. He could battle Tiafoe (No. 10) if they each win their first four matches.

In women's competition, Swiatek will face No. 92 Rebecca Peterson of Sweden in her first-round match. No. 11 Petra Kvitova of the Czech Republic and Gauff are among the top players she could meet before the semifinals.

Gauff will start her run with a match against a qualifier. The American, who snapped a six-match losing streak to Swiatek en route to her first major

title earlier this month in Cincinnati, could meet the top women's player again if they each win their first four matches.

Sabalenka will face No. 113 Maryna Zanevska of Belgium in the first round. No. 12 Barbora Krejckova of the Czech Republic and No. 5 Ons Jabeur of Tunisia are the top players Sabalenka could face in the quarterfinals.

Pegula, No. 7 Caroline Garcia of France, No. 9 Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic could meet Sabalenka, Krejckova or Jabeur, among others, in the semifinals.

The women's final will air at 4 p.m. EDT Sept. 9 on ESPN. The men's final will air the next day at the same time on ESPN.

U.S. Open schedule  
All times EDT  
Monday  
First round from noon to 11 p.m. on ESPN  
Tuesday  
First round from noon to 7 p.m. on ESPN; 7 to 11 p.m. on ESPN and ESPN2  
Wednesday  
Second round from noon to 7 p.m. on ESPN; 7 to 11 p.m. on ESPN and ESPN2  
Thursday

Second round from noon to 6 p.m. on ESPN; 6 to 11 p.m. on ESPN2

Friday

Third round from noon to 6 p.m. on ESPN; 6 to 11 on ESPN2

Saturday

Third round from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on ESPN2

Sunday

Round of 16 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on ESPN; 3 to 6 p.m. on ABC; 6 to 11 p.m. on ESPN2

Sept. 4

Round of 16 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on ESPN; 7 to 11 p.m. on ESPN2

Sept. 5

Mens and women's quarterfinals from noon to 11 p.m. on ESPN

Sept. 6

Mens and women's quarterfinals from noon to 11 p.m. on ESPN

Sept. 7

Women's semifinals from 7 to 11 p.m. on ESPN

Sept. 8

Men's semifinals from 3 to 6 p.m. and 7 to 10 p.m. on ESPN

Sept. 9

Women's final at 4 p.m. on ESPN

Sept. 10

Men's final at 4 p.m. on ESPN

# Giants agree to trade for Bills defensive end Boogie Basham

Alex Butler

Aug. 29 (UPI) -- The Buffalo Bills agreed to trade defensive end Boogie Basham to the New York Giants, a league source told UPI on Tuesday morning.

Basham, a second-round pick in the 2021 NFL Draft, totaled 19 combined tackles, two sacks, two passes defended, a fumble recovery, an interception and a touchdown in 15 games last season.

He totaled 18 combined tackles and 2.5 sacks in eight games in 2021.

The two-year veteran is expected to be a depth option for the Giants. Azeem Ojulari, Micah McFadden, Bobby Okereke and Kayvon Thibodeaux are among the Giants' other linebackers/pass rushers.

Last Thursday, the Giants also added to their linebacker group by ac-

quiring former first-round pick Isaiah Simmons from the Arizona Cardinals.

On Monday, the Giants waived defensive back Zyon Gilbert and guards Jack Anderson and Wyatt Davis with injury designations. They also placed tight end Chris Myarick on the reserve/injured list.

The Giants announced 11 transactions Sunday. They waived defensive end Darren Evans and terminated the contract of defensive end Tashawn Bower in that wave of transactions.

All NFL teams have until 4 p.m. EDT Tuesday to reduce their rosters to 53 players.

The Giants will start the regular season with an NFC East divisional matchup against the Dallas Cowboys on Sept. 10 at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J.

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# La Voz Latina

## Spanish soccer officials demand Luis Rubiales resign for World Cup kiss

Alex Butler

Aug. 29 (UPI) -- Regional presidents of the Royal Spanish Football Federation called for president Luis Rubiales to resign immediately, saying he "damaged the image of Spanish football" with his unwanted World Cup kiss of player Jenni Hermoso.

The action came after federation officials held an "urgent" meeting Monday morning in Madrid. They announced the result Monday night, as demonstrations supporting Hermoso occurred in Spain's capital city.

Rubiales had said Friday at a general assembly at federation headquarters in Madrid that the controversy was the result of "fake feminism" and refused to resign. "After the latest events and the unacceptable behaviors that have seriously



Royal Spanish Football Federation officials asked president Luis Rubiales (L) to resign immediately on Monday in Madrid. Photo by Juan Carlos Hidalgo/EPA-EFE

damaged the image of Spanish football, the presidents request that Mr. Luis Rubiales immediately present his resignation as president of the RFEF," the federation said in a news release.

On Saturday, FIFA, the world governing body for soccer, suspended Rubiales for 90 days pending disciplinary proceedings. FIFA opened those proceedings Thursday, four days after the federation president kissed Hermoso during the World

Cup trophy presentation Aug. 20 in Sydney.

Spanish prosecutors also announced Monday that they opened an investigation into Rubiales. They said they will contact Hermoso and inform her of her rights as a victim of an "alleged crime of sexual aggression" over the next two weeks.

Hermoso says that "at no time" did she consent to the kiss, which Rubiales claimed was "consensual" and initiated by the mid-

fielder.

The federation previously threatened to take legal action against Hermoso, accusing her of lying about the exchange. In that news release, the federation posted photos and provided explanations of the exchange, but did not include an image of the kiss.

Footage of the incident, still available on YouTube, shows Rubiales pulling the midfielder's head forward with both hands and kissing her on the lips.

Last week, Spain's Supreme Sports Council filed a petition to the Administrative Sports Court requesting Rubiales' removal. The council called his behavior "unacceptable" in the news release.

More than 80 Spanish players also announced they would not play again in international competitions until Rubiales was removed from or resigned from the role.

Hermoso, who has continuously denied that the kiss was consensual, has received widespread support from fellow players, fans and soccer and government officials.

"We warmly congratulate the women's soccer team for their victory in the World Cup," the federation said in its news release.

"We value the meaning and legacy of success for Spanish sport. We express our admiration and gratitude to an unrepeatable

group of players and we extend our congratulations to all those who have built, over the years with determination, the growth of women's football.

"We will urge the corresponding bodies to carry out a deep and imminent organic restructuring in strategic positions of the federation to give way to a new stage of management in Spanish football."

In its statement, the federation also requested for interim president Pedro Rocha to immediately withdraw a request for UEFA to suspend federation teams from competition.

"The presidents' commission has given its unanimous support to Pedro Rocha so that he leads a new stage where dialogue and reconciliation with all football institutions is the line to follow," the federation said.



The United States Women's National Team is No. 3 in the newest edition of the FIFA world rankings. Photo by Joel Carrett/EPA-EFE.

## USA slips to lowest spot in history of FIFA Women's soccer rankings

Alex Butler

Aug. 25 (UPI) -- The United States slipped to No. 3 in world, their lowest placement in FIFA women's soccer rankings history, the soccer governing body announced Friday morning. The drop follows a disappointing World Cup finish.

Sweden, who eliminated the Americans in the Round of 16, climbed from No. 3 to No. 1. Spain, who beat England in the final Sunday in Sydney, jumped from No. 6 to No. 2.

Veteran U.S. forward and polarizing activist Megan Rapinoe recently told The Atlantic that she expected the Americans to go deeper in the tournament, but wasn't "devastated" by the result.

"Was there a little bit more in the tournament for us? Yes, I think so," Rapinoe said. "But in the end, I think we played as good as we could, and we tried as hard as we could, and sometimes you lose. It's hard to win everything."

"That's part of life, and that's a beautiful part of sport to me. I don't look at it as this devastating thing

and a verdict on who we are as players or as a team."

England and France round out the Top 5 teams in the new rankings. No. 6 Germany, the No. 7 Netherlands, No. 8 Japan, No. 9 Brazil and No. 10 Canada are the other teams inside the Top 10.

South Africa, who started the tournament at No. 54 and advanced to the Round of 16, moved inside the Top 50 (No. 45). Morocco, who started at No. 72 before a Round of 16 exit, climbed to No. 58. Fellow Round of 16 team Nigeria climbed from No. 40 to No. 32.

The Americans lost the top spot in the rankings for the first time since June 2017. They fell outside the Top 2 for the first time since 2003, when the rankings started.

The U.S. women's team, who won back-to-back World Cup titles in 2015 and 2019, didn't finish worse than third place in their previous eight tournament appearances. They scored just four times in four games at the tournament. Their Round of 16 loss resulted in their earliest exit in the his-

tory of the Women's World Cup.

The loss also led to the resignation of Vlatko Andonovski and continued criticism of player performance under the manager.

"When a coach comes in, it's like, hey, how do we get the best out of every single individual player putting the most simplicity into a 10-day camp every few months and getting the best out of your team, and without overcomplicating everything?" U.S. midfielder Lindsey Horan told former teammates Tobin Heath and Christen Press this week on the Recap YouTube show.

"I could talk about the last four-year cycle, and we don't need to get into every single thing, but that's not what we did. We did not get the best out of every single individual. I don't think everyone was fully prepared, and that's on us as well."

The U.S. women will face South Africa in an international friendly Sept. 21 at TQL Stadium in Cincinnati. They will face the South Africans again three days later in Chicago.

## NCT U shares 'Baggy Jeans' performance video

By Annie Martin  
UPI

South Korean boy band NCT U has released a new video for its song "Baggy Jeans."

The K-pop stars, a subunit of NCT, shared a dance performance video for the track Wednesday.

The video shows the members of NCT U perform the "Baggy Jeans" choreography on a set resembling a car junkyard.

"Baggy Jeans" appears on the new album Golden Age. NCT released the album as a full group on Monday.

Golden Age is NCT's fourth full-length album as a full group. The album is a follow-up to Universe, released in December 2021.

NCT performs as a full group and also features the subunits NCT U, NCT 127, NCT Dream, WayV and DoJa Jung. NCT U consists of Taeyong, Doyoung, Ten, Jaehyun and Mark.

