Top U.S. drug agency a notable holdout in Biden’s push to loosen federal marijuana restrictions

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and JIM MUSTIAN
Associated Press

In an isolated part of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration headquarters known as the 12th-floor “bubble,” chief Anne Milgram made an unusual request of top deputies summoned in March for what she called the “Marijuana Meeting”: Nobody could take notes.

Over the next half hour, she broke the news that the Biden administration would soon be issuing a long-awaited order reclassifying pot as a less-dangerous drug, a major hurdle toward federal legalization that DEA has long resisted.

And Milgram went on to reveal another twist, according to two people familiar with the private meeting who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, that the process normally steered by the DEA had been taken over by the U.S. Justice Department and the action would not be signed by her but by Attorney General Merrick Garland.

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Milgram didn’t give aides a reason for the unprec- edented omission and nei- ther she nor the DEA has explained since. But it un- folded this past week exact- ly as laid out in that meet- ing two months ago, with the most significant drug policy change in 50 years launched without the sup- port of the nation’s premier narcotics agency.

“DEA has not yet made a determination as to its views of the appropriate schedule for marijuana,” reads a sentence tucked 13 pages into Garland’s 92-page or- der last Thursday outlining the Bider administration’s proposal to shift pot from its current Schedule 1 along- side heroin and LSD to the less tightly regulated Schedule III with such drugs as ket- amine and some anabolic steroids. Internal records ac- companying the order indi- cate the DEA sent a memo to the Justice Department in late January seeking addi- tional scientific input to determine whether marijua- na has an accepted medi- cal use, a key requirement for reclassification. But those concerns were overruled by Justice Department at- torneys, who deemed the DEA’s criteria “impermissibly narrow.”

Several current and former DEA officials told the AP they believe politics may be at play, contending the Justice Department is mov- ing forward with the mari- juana reclassification be- cause President Joe Biden wants to use the issue to woo voters in his re-election campaign and wasn’t will- ing to give the DEA time for more studies that likely would have dragged bey- ond Election Day.

Those officials also noted that while the Controlled Substances Act grants the attorney general responsi- bility for regulating the sale of dangerous drugs, fed- eral law still delegates the authority to classify drugs to the DEA administrator.

“It’s crystal clear to me that the Justice Department hijacked the reschedul- ing process, placing pol- itics above public safety,” said Derek Mattz, a retired agent who once headed the DEA’s Special Opera- tions Division. “If there’s sci- entific evidence to support this decision, then so be it. But you’ve got to let the sci- entists evaluate it.”

Former DEA Administrator Tim Shea said the striking absence of Milgram’s sign- off suggests she was back- ing “the DEA professionals.” If she had supported it she would have signed it and sent it in,” said Shea, who served in the Trump ad- ministration. “DEA was op- posed to this and the poli- tics entered and overruled them. It’s demoralizing. Ev- erybody feels there are agents in the streets to the leader- ship in DEA knows the dan- ger this brings.” The White House did not respond to a request for comment but Press Secretary Karine Jean- Pierre previously said Biden was committed to fulfilling a 2020 campaign prom- ise. “He said no person, no American who possesses mari- juana should go to jail. It is affecting communities across the country, including communities of color,” Justice Department attor- neys defended Garland’s decision to proceed without Milgram’s backing, saying in a separate memo that the action was prompted by “sharply different views” between DEA and the De- partment of Health and Hu- man Services. The HHS last year recommended reclas- sifying marijuana, deeming it less risky to public health than cocaine, heroin and oxycodone, and effective in treating anorexia, pain and other ailments. HHS concluded in part that “although abuse of marijuana produces clear evidence of a risk to public health, that risk is relatively lower than” that posed by other drugs. The DEA balked at those findings and Garland’s or- der cites at least 10 times when the drug agency re- quested additional informa- tion before blessing HHS’ medical findings. It did not respond to AP questions seeking further comment.

The Justice Department didn’t comment on internal differences but in a state- ment said that the propos- al was “consistent with the scientific and medical de- terminations of HHS.”

The dissonance within the federal government under- scores the continuing de- bate over the risks posed by cannabis, even as 38 states have legalized medi- cal marijuana and 24 have legalized its recreational use. All the while, more vot- ers — 70% of adults, accord- ing to a Gallup poll last fall — support legalization, the highest level yet recorded by the polling firm.

“The argument that mari- juana is as dangerous as fentanyl, cocaine and meth is laughable,” said Matthew C. Zorn, a Hous- ton-based attorney who writes a newsletter on can- nabis regulation. “The DEA isn’t where most Americans are. They’re standing on the wrong side of history.”

But even HHS’ National In- stitute on Drug Abuse has come out with statements in apparent conflict with HHS’ recommendation to reclas- sify pot, saying the potency of marijuana has increased over the years, resulting in higher numbers of emer- gency room visits to treat a wide range of physical and mental effects, from breath- ing problems and mental impairment to hallucina- tions and paranoia.

“Whether smoking or other- wise consuming marijuana has therapeutic benefits that outweigh its health risks is still an open question that science has not resolved,” Nora Volkow, a neurosci- entist who leads NIDA, is currently quoted as saying on the institute’s website. She did not immediately respond to the AP’s request for comment.

The NIDA last performed a medical evaluation of mari- juana in 2015 — a year be- fore the Obama administra- tion’s DEA rejected a similar request to reschedule the drug. This time, after Biden or- dered a review of the drug’s status in 2022, HHS adopted new criteria to reach its re- scheduling conclusion, tak- ing into account the states that have already legalized medical marijuana.

The rescheduling move, first reported by the AP last month, faces a potentially lengthy process. The DEA, which is not bound by HHS’ medical determinations at this point, will take public comment on the resched- uling plan before a review by an administrative judge and the publishing of a final rule. Federal prosecutions involving marijuana are al- ready exceedingly rare but a Schedule III classification would still make pot a con- trolled substance subject to rules and regulations.

For her part, Milgram has said little about her stance on marijuana and was not asked about it during her confirmation. When she took the helm of the agen- cy in 2021, she privately told colleagues she considered the DEA’s reaction a distraction from the far more serious fentanyl crisis, according to one of the people who spoke to the AP. Milgram is known for a progressive, data-driven approach to law enforce- ment dating to her days as the Democratic attor- ney general of New Jersey. When the state’s governor, a close ally, signed a bill in 2010 making the state the 14th to legalize marijuana le- gal for medical purposes, she said only that the legis- lation was “workable.”

This past week, she was simi- larly opaque in a three-sen- tence announcement to DEA employees obtained by the AP. “As required,” she wrote, “the DEA will post this notice to the AP’s request for comment. The NIDA last performed a medical evaluation of mari- juana in 2015 — a year be- fore the Obama administra- tion’s DEA rejected a similar request to reschedule the drug. This time, after Biden or- dered a review of the drug’s status in 2022, HHS adopted new criteria to reach its re- scheduling conclusion, tak- ing into account the states that have already legalized medical marijuana.

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Top Democrat calls for Biden to replace FDIC chairman to fix agency's 'toxic culture'

By KEN SWEET
AP Business Writer
NEW YORK (AP) — The most powerful Democrat in Congress on banking and financial issues called for President Joe Biden to replace the chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. on Monday, saying the agency is broken and there must be "fundamental changes at the FDIC."

This follows a damning report about the agency's toxic workplace culture was released earlier this month and the inability of FDIC Chair Martin Gruenberg to convince Congress in testimony last week that he is able to turn the agency around despite the report saying Gruenberg himself was often the source of the problems.

"After exhausting last week's hearing, reviewing the independent report, and receiving further outreach from FDIC employees to the Banking and Housing Committee, I am left with one conclusion: there must be fundamental changes at the FDIC," said Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, and chairman of the Senate Banking Committee.

Up until Monday, no Democrats had called for Gruenberg's replacement, although several came very close to doing so in their own statements. Brown's statement will likely lead to other Democrats to now call for Gruenberg's removal.

In his statement, Brown did not call for Gruenberg to be fired. He is in the middle of his six-year term as chairman of the FDIC and if Gruenberg were to step down, Vice Chair Travis Hill, a Republican, would lead the agency. Brown instead called on President Biden to nominate a new chair for the FDIC "without delay," which the Senate would then confirm.

Republicans have been calling for Gruenberg to step down for some time. At Thursday's hearing, Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., and the top Republican on the committee, detailed several stories of female FDIC workers who outlined extreme harassment and stalking by their coworkers, complaints that were dismissed by supervisors, according to the report.

"Marty — you've heard me say this to you directly — you should resign," Scott said. "Your employees do not have confidence in you. And this is not a single incident. This spans over a decade-plus of your leadership at the FDIC."

Scott, who called for Gruenberg to step down in December when the initial allegations were made public, is now calling for the Banking Committee to hold a separate hearing on the FDIC's workplace issues.

Gruenberg has been involved in various levels of leadership at the FDIC for nearly 20 years, and this is his second full term as FDIC chair. His long tenure at the agency at the highest levels of power has made him largely responsible for the agency's toxic work environment, according to the independent report outlining the problems at the agency.

The report released Tuesday by law firm Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton cites incidents of stalking, harassment, homophobia and other violations of employment regulations, based on more than 500 complaints from employees.

Complaints included a woman who said she was stalked by a coworker and continually harassed even after complaining about his behavior; a field office supervisor referring to gay men as "little girls;" and a female field examiner who described receiving a picture of an FDIC senior examiner's private parts.

The FDIC is one of several banking system regulators. The Great Depression-era agency is best known for running the nation's deposit insurance program, which insures Americans' deposits up to $250,000 in case their bank fails.

Sheila Bair, who was chair of the FDIC through the 2008 financial crisis and was one of the most prominent voices from government at that time, posted on Twitter on Monday that it would be best for the agency if Gruenberg would step down.

"This controversy is hurting him and his agency. For his own sake and everyone at the FDIC, he should announce his intention to resign effective with the appointment," she said.

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Board of Directors Chairman Martin Gruenberg, testifies during the House Committee on Financial Services hearing on oversight of prudential regulators, Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

Hunter Biden presses for delay in federal gun trial set to begin next month

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST
Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — Hunter Biden pressed for a delay in his federal gun case on Monday, asking an appeals court to pause the Delaware trial set to begin next month.

Defense attorneys for the president's son argued there isn't an urgent need to start the trial on the June 3 date set by the federal judge overseeing the case. They also cite the short time between the Delaware trial and the start of another trial on tax charges in California.

Hunter Biden has pleaded not guilty to lying about his drug use in October 2018 on a form to buy a gun that he kept for about 11 days in Delaware. He has acknowledged an addiction to crack cocaine during that period, but his lawyers have said he didn't break the law.

The lawyers are asking the full 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to hear a bid to dismiss the prosecution. It was rejected by a three-judge panel that did not rule on the merits of his claims, but said the court doesn't have jurisdiction to review the matter. The lawyers are also appealing a separate decision from U.S. District Judge Maryellen Noreika rejecting a claim that the case violates the Constitution's Second Amendment on firearm ownership.

Those rulings paved the way for the Justice Department to bring President Joe Biden's son to trial in the midst of the president's reelection campaign. Hunter Biden is separately charged in the tax case in California that is tentatively scheduled to go to trial in late June.


Associated Press
Pro-Palestinian protesters at Drexel ignore call to disband as arrests nationwide surpass 3,000

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Pro-Palestinian protesters ignored a request by Drexel University’s president to disband their encampment on Monday as arrests linked to campus demonstrations against the Israel-Hamas war surpassed the 3,000 mark nationwide. Drexel’s campus remained on lockdown, with classes being held virtually as police kept watch over the demonstration on the school’s Korman Quad. Many Drexel employees were told to work from home.

In a statement issued a day earlier, Drexel President John Fry said as many as 60 protesters were at the encampment, labeling it as “Intolerably disruptive to normal university operations.” He said there were “serious concerns about the conduct of some participants, including distorting reports and images of protesters subjecting passersby to antisemitic, sexist, and combatant speech, signs, and chants.” Fry threatened disciplinary action against Drexel students participating in the protest.

The Drexel Palestine Coalition responded on Instagram late Sunday that “it is slander to accuse the encampment of ‘hateful’ or ‘intimidating’ actions when we have done neither.” The group accused Drexel and city police of harassment and intimidation. A pro-Palestinian group of faculty and staff blasted Fry on Monday for shuttering campus facilities and said the encampment was “not disruptive to learning.”

City Hall to west Philadelphia on Saturday, nearby, on the University of Pennsylvania campus, university and city police arrested 19 demonstrators Friday night, including six Penn students. On Monday, Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner declined to charge four of the Penn protesters, citing a lack of evidence submitted by campus police. Krasner’s office approved misdemeanor charges against three others. The remaining 12 arrested Friday night were given citations for failing to disperse. Penn’s main commencement ceremony, meanwhile, was held Monday under tightened security and a ban on flags and signs. There were no disruptions.

Elsewhere, Wesleyan University in Connecticut said it has reached agreement with student protesters to review possible divestment, with meetings scheduled for later this month and in the fall. Wesleyan President Michael Roth announced the deal over the weekend and disclosed that 1.7% of Wesleyan’s endowment was invested in aerospace and defense businesses, but that none were directly involved in the manufacture of weapons.

The Associated Press has recorded at least 82 incidents since April 18 where arrests were made at campus protests across the U.S. At least 3,025 people have been arrested on the campuses of 61 colleges and universities. The figures are based on AP reporting and statements from universities and law enforcement agencies. The latest Israel-Hamas war began when Hamas and other militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing around 1,200 people and taking an additional 230 hostages. Palestinian militants still hold about 100 captives, while Israel’s military has killed more than 35,000 people in Gaza, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry, which doesn’t distinguish between civilians and combatants.

Police searched the home, located in a suburban town about 40 miles (64 kilometers) east of Manhattan, for about two weeks after his arrest. Monday’s search also comes about a month after authorities spent more than a week searching in a wooded area in Manville. The remains of two women were found years earlier in the area, located about 40 miles (64 kilometers) east of Heuermann’s home, though he hasn’t been charged in those killings.

Heuermann, 60, is expected to be back in court June 18 for a status hearing in Suffolk County Criminal Court in Riverhead. No trial date has been set.

In January, he was charged in the death of a fourth woman, Maureen Brainard-Barnes, who vanished in 2007 and whose remains were found more than three years later along a coastal highway on Long Island. The formal charges came months after authorities labeled him the prime suspect in the Connecticut mother’s death when he was arrested in July in the deaths of three other women.
WikiLeaks founder Assange wins right to appeal against an extradition order to the U.S.

By BRIAN MELLEY and JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange can appeal an extradition order to the United States on espionage charges, a London court ruled Monday — a decision likely to further drag out an already long legal saga.

High Court Judges Victoria Sharp and Jeremy Johnson ruled for Assange after his lawyers argued that the U.S. government provided “blatantly inadequate” assurances that he would have the same free speech protections as an American citizen if extradited from Britain. Assange, 52, has been indiected on 17 espionage charges and one charge of computer misuse over his website’s publication of a trove of classified U.S. documents almost 15 years ago.

Hundreds of supporters cheered and applauded outside as the ruling reached them from inside the Royal Courts of Justice.

Assange’s wife, Stella, said the U.S. had tried to put “lipstick on a pig — but the judge did not buy it.” She said the U.S. should “read the situation” and drop the case.

“If a family are relieved but how long can this go on?” she said. "This case is pretty shameful and it is taking an enormous toll on Julian.”

The Australian computer expert has spent the last five years in a British high-security prison after taking refuge in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London for seven years. Assange was not in court to hear the ruling because of health reasons, his lawyer said. American prosecutors allege that Assange encouraged and helped U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to steal diplomatic cables and military files that WikiLeaks published.

Assange’s lawyers have argued he was a journalist who exposed U.S. military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sending him to the U.S., they said, would expose him to a politically motivated prosecution and risk a “flagrant denial of justice.”

The U.S. government says Assange’s actions went way beyond those of a journalist gathering information, amounting to an attempt to solicit, steal and indiscriminately publish classified government documents.

The brief ruling from the bench followed arguments over Assange’s claim that by releasing the confidential documents he was essentially a publisher and due the free press protections guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The U.S. government says Assange’s actions were “simply unproven conduct” and that he would face the death penalty if extradited and would have the same free speech protections as a U.S. citizen.

The U.S. provided those assurances but Assange’s lawyers only accepted that he would not face the prospect of capital punishment. They said the assurance that Assange could “raise and seek to rely upon” the First Amendment fell short of the protections he deserved. Further, they argued that the prosecutor refused to say he would not challenge Assange’s right to use such a defense.

The real issue is whether an adequate assurance has been provided to remove the real risk identified by the court,” Fitzgerald said. “If it is submitted that no adequate assurance has been made.”

Attorney James Lewis, representing the U.S., said Assange would be “entitled to the full panoply of due process trial rights” but said some of his conduct was “simply unprotected” by the First Amendment.

“No one, neither U.S. citizens nor foreign citizens, are entitled to rely on the First Amendment in relation to publication of illegally obtained national defense information giving the names of innocent sources, to their grave and imminent risk of harm,” Lewis said.

The court ruled that Assange could appeal on two grounds, both of which were related to the free press issue. The judges said if he was deprived of a First Amendment defense then his extradition could be incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights, which also provides free speech and media protections. Secondly, if he can’t rely on the First Amendment because he’s not a U.S. citizen then he could be treated unfairly because of his nationality.

Violence intensifies in southwest Colombia as FARC holdout group attacks police and military

By MANUEL RUEDA
Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Violence intensified in southwestern Colombia on Monday when a bomb blast injured six people in the city of Jamundi and an attack by insurgents on a police station in the rural town of Morales left at least two officers dead, according to police.

Colombia’s government attributed the attacks to the FARC-EMC, a rebel group that broke off from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and refused to sign a 2016 peace deal in which more than 14,000 rebels demobilized.

The group’s western faction walked away from a new round of peace talks with the government in April and has since staged a series of attacks on military and police, including a roadside bomb last Friday that killed an 11-year-old.

Elizabeth Dickinson, a Colombia analyst at the International Crisis Group, said Monday’s attacks show that the EMC’s western faction is trying to set itself apart by becoming “the only armed or criminal group in Colombia that is directly attacking the state.” Dickinson said the FARC-EMC’s western front, which is led by commander Ivan Mordisco, could end up splitting from EMC groups in eastern Colombia that are still involved in peace talks with the government.

“The split within the EMC is real and is likely to be permanent,” she said. “We are headed towards a situation of atomization and fragmentation in the conflict which has pretty dramatic implications for civilians.”

Police patrol the area after a motorcycle bomb exploded at a hotel in which some police officers would be staying in Jamundi, Colombia, Monday, May 20, 2024. Associated Press
Ex-South African leader Zuma, now a ruling party critic, is disqualified from next week's election

Associated Press

By MARI YAMAGUCHI

Former South African President Jacob Zuma greets supporters at Orlando stadium in the township of Soweto, South Africa, for the launch of his newly formed uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party's manifesto Saturday, May 18, 2024.

The Constitutional Court said a section of the constitution disqualifying people from standing for Parliament if they've been sentenced to more than 12 months in prison without the option of a fine does apply to the 82-year-old former leader. Zuma was sentenced to 15 months in prison in 2021 by the court for contempt for refusing to testify at a judicial inquiry into government corruption.

Zuma cannot serve as a lawmaker until five years after that sentence is completed, the court said in a ruling nine days ahead of the May 29 election.

Zuma once led South Africa's ruling African National Congress party but was forced out as its leader in 2017 and resigned as president in 2018 under a cloud of corruption. Since then, the beleaguered ANC facing the biggest challenge to its majority, and the election might force it into a national coalition government. That would be the country's biggest political shift since apartheid was dismantled with the first all-race elections in 1994.

The court ruling doesn't prevent Zuma's party, called uMkhonto weSizwe (Spear of the Nation), or the MK Party, from contesting the election. Zuma appears on the party's election posters and is the face of its campaign. South Africa's independent electoral commission that governs elections said Zuma's image could remain on the party's election regalia, but his name would be removed from its list of proposed candidates.

South Africans don't vote directly for their president, but rather for parties. Those parties get seats in Parliament according to their share of the vote. The president is elected by lawmakers, meaning the party that holds the majority chooses the president. That has always been the ANC since 1994, but if it receives less than 50% of the vote this time, it will need a coalition to form a government and reelect Ramaphosa for a second and final term.

Zuma's MK Party could erode more of the ANC's vote and make it harder for the ruling party to retain its majority. Zuma still enjoys significant support, and the court's ruling increases the political temperature after some MK Party officials had suggested they would reject any decision stopping Zuma from being a candidate.

Ramaphosa told Radio 702 he didn't think the decision would cause unrest but added: "Should there be any threat of violence, our security forces are ready." South Africa has had credible, peaceful elections since it became a democracy in 1994. Zuma was initially disqualified from running for Parliament by the electoral commission. He successfully challenged that decision at the Electoral Court. Monday's ruling overturned that and confirmed his disqualification. Zuma was South Africa's leader for nearly a decade from 2009-2018, but stepped down under internal pressure from the ANC as allegations emerged of widespread government graft.

We can't have nice things! Japan imposes new rules to climb Mt. Fuji to fight overtourism, littering

By MARI YAMAGUCHI

Those who want to climb one of the most popular trails of the iconic Japanese Mount Fuji will now have to reserve ahead and pay a fee as the picturesque stratovolcano struggles with overtourism, littering and those who attempt rushed “bullet climbing,” putting lives at risk.

The Yamanashi prefecture said in a statement via the Foreign Press Center of Japan Monday it introduced new rules for the climbing season, starting July 1 to Sep. 10 for those hiking the Yoshida Trail on the Yamanashi side of the 3,776-meter (nearly 12,300 feet) high mountain, designated a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site in 2013. Only 4,000 climbers will be allowed to enter the trail per day; 3,000 slots will be available for online booking at a fee of 2,000 yen (about $18), and the remaining 1,000 can be booked in person on the day of the climb.

Climbers can book their slots via Mount Fuji Climbing’s official website, jointly run by the Environment Ministry and Mt. Fuji’s two home prefectures Yamanashi and Shizuoka. Mt. Fuji is divided into 10 stations, and there are four “5th stations” halfway up the mountain from where the four trails — the Yoshida, Fujinomiya, Subashiri, and Gotemba — start to the top. Under the new system, climbers need to choose whether they will do a day hike or stay overnight at the several available huts across the trail. Once they input their information and the day of the climb, they are given a QR code to be scanned at the 5th station. Those who have not booked an overnight hut will be sent back down and not allowed to climb between 4 p.m. and 3 a.m., mainly to stop climbers who rush to the summit without adequate rest, raising safety concerns, authorities said, Yamanashi Gov. Katara Nagasaki thanked people in a statement, for their understanding and cooperation in helping conserve Mt. Fuji.
Sea turtle conservation by Turtugaruba Foundation

ORANJESTAD — Turtugaruba was founded on September 3rd, 2003, by a group of enthusiastic volunteers. Ten years earlier in 1993, a Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan (STRAP) was introduced in Aruba and the rest of the Caribbean as an initiative of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Tom Barnes, who was working at DLVV (Department of Agriculture, Husbandry and Fishery) was one of the writers of the STRAP for Aruba, together with Karen Eckert, director of WIDECAST (Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network). This is how sea turtle conservation started on the island following a plan that is still complied with today.

Tom formed a group of volunteers around him like an organization such as DLVV, because nature does not know office hours. This group of volunteers used the name Widecast Aruba and today there are still a few of them active. They first started protecting the Leatherback Sea Turtle nests on Palm Beach and Eagle Beach. This group also investigated which other species of sea turtles use Aruba as their nesting habitat and which beaches are used by them. For a period of 25 years, a study has been conducted in which investigators monitored the beaches every morning to study turtle movement. Now, there is a good overview of sea turtle nesting activities.

There are 4 different species of sea turtle that visit Aruba to lay their eggs, each with their own specific season:

- Leatherback Sea Turtle - Lederschildpad - Driekiel (March – September)
- Loggerhead Sea Turtle - Dikkopschildpad - Cawama (May – September)
- Hawksbill Sea Turtle - Karetschildpad - Caret (June – December)
- Green Turtle - Soepschildpad - Turtuga Blanco (July-November)

Investigators also reached a better understanding and overview of the biggest threats to the sea turtles’ existence in Aruba and how these problems should be tackled. Despite the hard work all those years, most problems have not really gone away. Luckily—and thanks to the enormous efforts from the volunteers, the sea turtles are still here. On Aruba, the sea turtles are threatened with extinction by pollution, people driving ATVs on dunes and beaches and the loss of nesting beaches due to coastal development for tourism. Because coastal development comes with artificial lighting, these can cause major issues for sea turtles. Female turtles usually come ashore at night looking for a dark beach to make her nest. However, a dark beach is hard to find here nowadays. Light causes stress and can result in her returning to the sea without laying her eggs. Furthermore, artificial lighting causes disorientation for the baby sea turtles (hatchlings). They crawl towards artificial light sources (like streetlights, hotel lights, etc.) and end up walking in the opposite direction towards the hotels and away from the sea. In the 90’s, it was a common occurrence to find complete nests of about 70 hatchlings dead on the street due to being run over by passing cars. Thanks to their protection methods and a lot of time and effort, the volunteers of Turtugaruba have managed to get this under control. However, for long-term prevention, there must be less light visible on the beaches and a strict regulation of it. Sea turtles simply need dark nesting beaches for their survival. It is clear that even more coastal development would not make the situation better for the sea turtles. Do we need more hotel rooms? And even busier beaches? These are the choices that Aruba has to make. Do we want to leave a place for the sea turtles? Not only do we need sea turtles, but so does the rest of the world! Sea turtles play a vital role in keeping our oceans healthy. The Green Turtle, for example, keeps the sea grasses on the bottom of the sea short and therefore a healthy place for many fish to deposit their eggs. The Leatherback, the largest turtle of the world, eats mainly jellyfish and helps maintain the balance between jellyfish and plankton.

Despite the threats that exist on Aruba, the turtles still keep coming. That’s why today Turtugaruba is especially proud of the volunteers and the many people and organizations of our community that carry a warm place in their hearts for the sea turtles. All four species are active now, which means all hands on deck in the field for us, the volunteers. We strive to keep the sea turtles, our oldest ‘repeat guests’, always coming back to Aruba and get the chance to reproduce here.
Paseo Herencia; An exciting destination for leisure and entertainment

Shopping
Paseo Herencia presents a captivating selection of stores catering to various preferences, encompassing beachwear, apparel, fragrances, footwear, jewelry, keepsakes, and much more. Unwind at Maggy’s, indulging in their salon services while exploring a range of beauty products. For a memorable gift crafted from natural ingredients, explore Aruba Aloe’s offerings. Iconic brands like Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Aldo, Carmen Steffens, Nike, and Pandora stand among the favorites.

Dining
Embark on a global culinary journey at Paseo Herencia’s diverse array of restaurants, each offering a unique dining experience. From the vibrant flavors of Iguana Cantina’s Mexican cuisine to the Spanish elegance of Xixon Spanish Restaurant, the innovative fusion of Pizza and Sushi at Fusion Cuisine, the grilled delights of Skewers Grill, the comfort of The Lazy Turtle, the creativity at Drunk’s Denial, and the seafood sensation of Sexy Shrimps Bar, and the familiar warmth of Starbucks, indulge in an unforgettable gastronomic adventure that spans the world’s finest cuisines, all within the charming ambiance of our outdoor center.

VIP Cinema
Indulge in an unparalleled cinematic experience at Caribbean Cinemas VIP, nestled on Paseo Herencia’s second floor. Relax in supremely comfortable reclining seats while enjoying movies on high-quality screens with state-of-the-art projection and 7.1 Dolby surround sound. Don’t forget to relish the delectable buttery popcorn.

Entertainment
Paseo Herencia offers live entertainment from Monday to Friday at 8pm on the center stage, as well as captivating nightly watershows at 7:30pm, 8:30pm, and 9:30pm. Thrill-seekers can explore the Airsoft experience, located behind The Lazy Turtle. For picture-perfect moments, capture Instagram-worthy shots at the Angel Wings installation between Pandora and Free Spirit, or amidst the Flying mosaic hearts behind King Churros. There’s more fun in store with delightful kids’ activities, including a Kids’ carousel and train ride, available every day from 6 pm to 10 pm.

Parking is complimentary for up to two hours when shopping, dining, or enjoying a movie at Paseo Herencia. Simply present your purchase receipt to the parking cashier. For more details on specials and events, visit the Paseo Herencia website at www.paseoherencia.com.

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Adriaan Laclé
One of Aruba’s richest men in the twentieth century

(Oranjestad)—The name Adriaan Laclé may ring a bell to locals as one of the bigger roads on the island, but about a century ago, Adriaan Laclé was a rich businessman, well-known for his generosity, wealth, and taste. Adriaan was born in 1866 and was the eldest of six children. Not much is known about his childhood upbringing or any of his earlier business ordeals, but during his hay day he often helped people get loans, was a well-established trader, and owned several plots of land. In fact, he commissioned the construction of the famous La Quinta Carmen manor—now a restaurant. Though he himself never lived in the beautiful manor, his own house also reflected his success and good taste. Today his house still stands in good condition and can be found in the back streets of main street Oranjestad. Regarding his personal life, it has been said that he was married twice during his lifetime. He had his first daughter during his first marriage but lost his wife soon after her birth. During his second marriage, he fathered 16 children. However, it has been said that only 11 of those 17 made it past 18 years of age. Perhaps two of his most well-known daughters are Maria Monica Laclé and Maria Veneranda Laclé, who went on to marry successful brothers Eloy Arends and Maximilian Arends, respectively. Their houses are still standing: Eloy and Maria Monica’s mansion functions as a townhall, used to host civil marriages, while Maximilian and Maria Veneranda’s house stands on the opposite side of the road to them—though currently under renovation after years left in ruin.

Source: De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over de geschiedenis van Aruba) by Evert Bongers.

Peter Scholing Receives Recognition as ‘Caribbean Information Professional of the Year’

Mr. Peter Scholing from the National Library of Aruba and the driving force behind Coleccion.aw, was named the ‘Caribbean Information Professional of the Year’ during the 53rd Acuril conference held in Guyana. Acuril is an association of libraries, museums, and archives in the Caribbean region. During their annual conference, a special recognition is given to an information specialist for their excellence in their work. This time, Mr. Peter Scholing from Aruba received this honor and recognition from Acuril for his pioneering work in establishing “Coleccion Aruba”, a unique platform in our region.

Besides being part of the Coleccion Aruba platform, Mr. Peter Scholing represents Aruba as the President of Memory of the World for Latin America and the Caribbean (MOWLAC), which is a United Nations program to preserve the history of countries as the memory of our world. Mr. Scholing is also a member of the National Commission of UNESCO in Aruba.
Many years ago, Cha Tiger did not live in the mondi*, but among civil society. Back then, he was feared by everyone. When he walked past in a hallway, everyone around would make room immediately, that’s how ferocious he was.

One night a group of friends was hanging out and they were talking about Cha Tiger. “You know, that tiger sure is incredibly strong and I don’t trust him one bit. He probably eats a lot too. Oh, I’m so scared of him!” one person stated.

“Oh, don’t be stupid! What can Cha Tiger do? He’s all bark and no bite, that’s it. I certainly am not afraid of him. I bet you guys that I could even sit on his back like I would any donkey.” It was Nanzi who said this. The people around him laughed at his remarks, thinking how silly it was for him to say such things.

“You, Nanzi? You are such a liar! He’ll stomp you into the ground! I won’t stop saying such nonsense.”

“I’m not lying!” Nanzi defended himself. “He’ll take me all the way to Shon Arei.”

The next morning, Shon Arei already knew of what Nanzi had been saying about Cha Tiger. He was really curious to see if Nanzi was brave enough to put his money where his mouth is.

Cha Tiger walked past. “Hey, Cha Tiger!” someone called to him. He growled at the person. “Hey, Cha Tiger! Listen!”

“Nanzi made fun of you, said he wasn’t afraid of you at all! Said he could sit on your back and that you weren’t as strong as we think you are.”

Cha Tiger stopped dead in his tracks, furious. “Well, I’ll set him straight!” Cha Tiger turned to Nanzi and said: “These mosquitos are so annoying! Cha Tiger, do you mind if I cut a piece of branch so I can keep these mosquitos away?” Cha Tiger let him take his branch. Eventually they made it out the mondi to where everyone else was. Nanzi immediately perked up and whacked Cha Tiger with his branch, making the tiger jump. He ran all the way to Shon Arei’s castle. Exhausted, he plumped down in front of His Majesty.

“Yes, Shon Arei? Cha Tiger ain’t nothing but a big donkey!” Nanzi said proudly. Everyone around cheered: “Hurray, Nanzi!” Poor Cha Tiger was so embarrassed that he was fooled by the conniving spider, and so he ran into the mondi to hide. To this day, it’s said that the tiger still hides away in the mondi.

Cha: Nickname placed in front of someone’s name and can mean anything, like friend. However, it often has negative connotations first.

Mondi: dry wooded areas found on the ABC islands.

Shon Arei: The King
Shi Maria: Nanzi’s wife.

Story and pictures are from “Kon Nanzi a Nek Shon Arei (I otro kuentanan antiano di e araña sabi)” by Nilida Pinto.
Fruit Loose & Veggie Boost: Aruban fruits and vegetables

Fresh fruits make a tropical holiday’s picture complete. Whether you see the mangoes hanging in the trees or the fresh fruit cocktail on the side table of your pool bed, the link is there: you are in the tropics. Aruba grows her own fruits and veggies and there are some pretty out-of-space local species you may never had heard of, but really healthy and delicious.

**Mispel**
This is a fruit with a character (5-10 cm/2-4 inches). It does not ripe until it is picked or falls off the tree. Mispel is hard with a sandpaper like texture when immature, soft and juicy when ripe. It’s technically a berry, but contains a skin similar to that of a kiwi. It’s grainy and sweet, with a light, musky flavor. The sap or gum from the tree is also a source of ‘chicle’ the original ingredient used to make chewing gum. Rich in tannins, it is also a source of ‘chicle’ the original ingredient used to make chewing gum. Vitamin C, essential for healthy immune function. Season: year-round.

**Shimarucu**
Maybe Aruba’s most popular wild fruit tree. You may have noticed cars at the side of the road and people picking those red berries. Well, that’s Shimarucu. The local habit to stop for these delicious fruits goes from generation to generation. Its fruit’s degree of sour depends on the amount of rain it gets. Red Shimarucu tends to taste better than orange. The fruit has super power: an anti-vitamin bomb. Adults only need to eat 3-4 of these berries to meet their daily recommended amount of Vitamin C. Season: Rainy months (Oct-Jan).

**Kenepa**
Ovoid green fruit that grows in bunches on trees up to 30m high. The fruit is related to the lychee and has tight, thin but rigid skins. Inside the skin is the tart, tangy, or sweet pulp of the fruit covering a large seed. The pulp is usually cream or orange colored. Kenepa strengthens the immune system, and prevents the reproduction of bacteria and viruses in the body. This fruit is highly recommended to treat lung infections and urinary tract infections. It also helps to cure insomnia and rejuvenates the nervous system. Season: the fruit typically ripen during the summer.

**Tamarind**
A delicious, sweet fruit that has a wide variety of uses and applications, both for medicinal and culinary purposes. It is a medium-sized bushy tree with evergreen leaves and fruit that develops in pods characterized by long, brown shells. Inside is a sticky, fleshy, juicy pulp, which is the Tamarind fruit. Both sweet and sour in taste, the fruit contains a significant level of vitamin C, as well as vitamin E, B vitamins, calcium, iron, phosphorus, potassium, manganese, and dietary fiber. There are also a number of organic compounds that make tamarind a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent. Season: March.

When it comes to veggies the island certainly offers a home-grown selection. They taste delicious and have their specific talents to boost your immune system. Start the day with a ‘ba-tida’ (smoothie) enriched with a local veggie touch or select your restaurant that offers local vegetable dishes to get the real pure taste of it.

**Bonch’i Cunucu**
A long, small bean, boiled for a side dish or snack. Long beans have a chewy, crunchy texture—more so than snap beans—and a flavor reminiscent of the dry navy bean or asparagus. Besides stir-fry, soups and salads, the long bean is a good choice for stewing, braising (to remain chewy and firm), sautéing, shallow frying, and deep frying. With cooking, the long bean’s bean flavor intensifies. Long beans are low in calories, about 45 calories per cup, and rich in vitamin A and also contain vitamin C and potassium. Season: year-round.

**Pumpkins**
Pumpkins are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, minerals and proteins. Pumpkins are used to make desserts, breads and soups.
Supermarket hours

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

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

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

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

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prongs and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

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

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Electrical power

Drinking water

Cruise ship Schedule: May 01 - May 28 2024

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How cockroaches spread around the globe to become the pest we know today

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN
AP Science Writer

DALLAS (AP) — They’re six-legged, hairy home invaders that just won’t die, no matter how hard you try.

Cockroaches are experts at surviving indoors, hiding in kitchen pipes or musty drawers. But they didn’t start out that way.

A new study uses genetics to chart cockroaches’ spread across the globe, from humble beginnings in southeast Asia to Europe and beyond. The findings span thousands of years of cockroach history and suggest the pests may have scuttled across the globe by hitching a ride with another species: people. “It’s not just an insect story,” said Stephen Richards, an assistant professor at Baylor College of Medicine who studies insect genes and was not involved with the study. “It’s an insect and humanity story.”

Researchers analyzed the genes of over 280 cockroaches from 17 countries and six continents. They confirmed that the German cockroach — a species found worldwide — actually originated in southeast Asia, likely evolving from the Asian cockroach around 2,100 years ago. Scientists have long suspected the German cockroach’s Asian origins since similar species still live there.

The research was published Monday in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The cockroaches then globe-trotted via two major routes. They traveled west to the Middle East about 1,200 years ago, perhaps hitchhiking in soldiers’ bread-baskets. And they may have stowed away on Dutch and British East India Company trade routes to get to Europe about 270 years ago, according to scientists’ reconstruction and historical records.

Once they arrived, inventions like the steam engine and indoor plumbing likely helped the insects travel further and get cozy living indoors, where they are most commonly found today. Researchers said exploring how cockroaches conquered past environments may lead to better pest control.

Modern-day cockroaches are tough to keep at bay because they evolve quickly to resist pesticides, according to study author Qian Tang, a postdoctoral researcher studying insects at Harvard University.

A biologist shows examples of American cockroaches (Periplaneta americana) and German cockroaches (Blattella germanica) at a lab in Monheim, Germany, March 5, 2001.
Sour Patch Kids Oreos? Peeps Pepsi? What's behind the weird flavors popping up on store shelves

By DEE-ANN DURBIN

AP Business Writer

Van Leeuwen Ice Cream usually draws customers with gourmet takes on classics like vanilla and pistachio. But occasionally, the artisanal ice cream maker headquartered in New York slips in what it calls a “shock flavor,” like Hidden Valley Ranch or pizza.

Surprising flavor combinations – think gravy-flavored Jones Soda or Sour Patch Kids Oreos – are showing up more frequently in grocery stores and restaurant chains.

Hershey recently introduced pink lemonade-flavored Kit Kats, while IHOP and Lay’s brought out Roozy Tooty Fresh 'n Fruity potato chips, designed to taste like strawberry-topped pancakes with a hint of bacon.

In the United Kingdom, Little Moons made fish-and-chips flavored ice cream, while Brach’s ran into that issue with its Turkey Dinner Candy Corn, a 2021 limited-edition version of the fall staple that tasted like turkey, stuffing, green beans, cranberry sauce, apple pie and coffee.

Lay’s Flamin’ Hot Dill Pickle chips did in 2019.

Brussels sprout-flavored editions are one of about a dozen limited-editions that Mondelez plans to release this year. Braun said it takes the company one or two years to develop such products, which stay on shelves for about nine weeks. She’s already thinking ahead to future flavors that blur the lines between sweet, salty and spicy.

Oddball pairings aren’t entirely new in the food and beverage industry. Hubba Bubba released a bubble gum-flavored soda in the late 1980s, for example. But manufacturers and their suppliers have gotten more sophisticated and efficient, making it easier to experiment and put out limited-editions more frequently, said Mark Lang, a food marketing expert and associate professor of marketing at the University of Tampa.

“Our work is just finding the freedom to explore a little bit more and get more creative,” Lang said.

Van Leeuwen’s Kraft Mac & Cheese flavored ice cream Wednesday, May 15, 2024, in the Brooklyn borough of New York.

Associated Press

By DEE-ANN DURBIN

AP Business Writer

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“We have learned from consumers that we don’t want to have something where they eat a few pieces of candy and then they toss it because there’s something that they don’t want to repeat,” Duffy said. “We want it to be a delicious flavor journey.”

Brach’s recently introduced Easter Brunch-flavored jelly beans, and they hit that mark, she said. The candy bears mimicked the flavors of blueberry maple pancakes, chocolate doughnuts, caramel cold brew, cinnamon rolls, berry smoothies and mimosa cocktails.

Shannon Weiner, senior director of insights and analytics at Ferrara, said the company closely tracks social media to see what flavors are trending. People are increasingly looking for dessert and dairy-flavored candies, she said. They’re also seeking more international flavors like Tajin, a brand of chile-lime spice from Mexico that recently did a collaboration with Ben Van Leeuwen.

Lang thinks the more time people spend in restaurants or trying out new foods, the more they seek out unusual flavors. “We are variety-seeking animals. We constantly are seeking something new and different; it’s in our wiring,” he said. “We like to experiment.”
Zverev's stock is rising for the French Open amid questions over Djokovic, Nadal, Sinner and Alcaraz

By ANDREW DAMPF
AP Sports Writer

ROME (AP) — Top-ranked Novak Djokovic hasn’t won a tournament all year. Record 14-time French Open champion Rafael Nadal has been far from his best. Janick Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz have been out injured. And Daniil Medvedev has won only one clay-court title in his career.

Considering the state of his rivals in the top five, Alexander Zverev’s credentials entering Roland Garros are looking pretty good following his second Italian Open title.

The clay-court Grand Slam in Paris starts this weekend.

“T’m somebody that I know when I don’t play well, I can lose to anyone, but when I play well, I know I can beat anyone. That’s my mindset. That’s how I think about it,” Zverev said after raising the trophy in Rome.

In all, Zverev has reached three consecutive semifinals at Roland Garros — which has led him to declare it’s the tournament he wants to win more than any other.

“It’s the one where I have the most memories, good or bad,” Zverev said. “U.S. Open, yes. I was two points away from winning the title. Of course, that’s also one that kind of sticks out. (But) Roland Garros, so close to being in the final in 2021. I felt like I was playing some of the best tennis of my life during the 2022 French Open semifinals against Nadal. In all, Zverev has reached three consecutive semifinals at Roland Garros — which has led him to declare it’s the tournament he wants to win more than any other.

That loss in the 2020 U.S. Open final to Dominic Thiem remains the closest that the 27-year-old Zverev has come to winning a Grand Slam title. Having been in the top five of the rankings for years, claimed Olympic gold in Tokyo three years ago and won the ATP Finals twice, a Grand Slam title is the only big thing missing in his career.

And if Zverev is going to contend in Paris, he’s going to have to do it while dealing with a major distraction. Zverev has disputed a penalty order from a German court over allegations that he caused bodily harm to a woman and he will go on trial in his home country starting on May 31 — entering the middle weekend of the French Open.

Zverev is accused of physically abusing and damaging the health of a woman during an argument in Berlin four years ago. He said in Rome that he won’t attend the start of the legal proceedings.

Scottie Scheffler’s Louisville court date postponed after arrest during PGA Championship

By DYLAN LOVAN
Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — A Kentucky court has postponed pro golfer Scottie Scheffler’s appearance on charges he injured a police officer and disobeyed commands outside the gates of Valhalla Golf Club as the venue hosted this year’s PGA Championship.

Scheffler, who was handcuffed and briefly jailed on Friday, had been due in court Tuesday, two days after finishing in the top ten at the PGA. But a judge postponed the court date until June 3, according to a statement Monday from Jefferson County Attorney Mike O’Connell.

Today, over the objection of Jefferson County Attorney Mike O’Connell, the District Judge presiding in the case of Mr. Scheffler granted the defendant’s attorney’s motion to continue Mr. Scheffler’s arraignment from May 21 to June 3 at 9 a.m., the statement said. “Our office continues to gather information in the case.”

Scheffler faces four charges, including felony assault over injuries a Louisville police officer suffered during the encounter. Officers at the scene were investigating a tournament volunteer’s death after he was hit by a bus outside the golf course when Scheffler arrived.

He was driving a credentialed PGA courtesy car when an officer said he “refused to comply and accelerated forward, dragging” the officer to the ground, according to an arrest report. Video at the scene showed Scheffler in handcuffs, a surreal image for the best male golfer in the world and the winner of last month’s Masters tournament.

Scheffler’s attorney, Steve Romines, has said the case is a misunderstanding and the golfer never disobeyed any officer’s orders. A telephone message seeking comment was left for Romines on Monday.
Analysis: When the 2024 NBA champion is crowned, a young star will likely lead the way

LeBron James will turn 40 in December. Stephen Curry is 36. Kevin Durant will turn 36 and Jimmy Butler will turn 35 by the time training camps start in the fall. They have been stars of the playoffs for years, players who come up biggest at the biggest times. But not this year. The next wave isn’t waiting its turn anymore. They’re here — a bunch of 20somethings, with one of them set to be the best player on the team that will be crowned the best in the NBA about a month from now.

It’ll be either Boston, Dallas, Indiana or Minnesota as the last team standing when the NBA Finals end next month. The best players on those teams — Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown for the Celtics, Luka Doncic for the Mavericks, Tyrese Haliburton for the Pacers and Anthony Edwards for the Timberwolves — are all in their 20s.

Brown is 27. Tatum is 26. Doncic is 25. Haliburton is 24. Edwards is only 22. James, Curry, Durant and Butler are still considered greats, but some of the NBA’s star torches surely seem like they’ve already been passed down to the next generation. They have no fear; Dallas guard Kyrie Irving said of the young stars, “They don’t see the O.G. superstars as guys that they look up to as much anymore. They want to kill our records. They want to kill us every time they get on the court. That was the first thing I noticed about Luka, that he just had no fear going against the best in the world. He always walks around like he’s the best player in the world, I think that’s the confidence of a champion. That’s where it starts.”

Out of the 21 regular starters used in the playoffs by the four teams left, only six have turned 30; Boston has 37-year-old Al Horford and 33-year-old Jue Holiday, the Mavericks have 32-year-old Irving, the Timberwolves have 36-year-old Mike Conley and 31-year-old Rudy Gobert, and the Pacers have 30-year-old Pascal Siakam.

But the Celtics have five players (Brown, Tatum, Horford, Holiday and Derrick White) with more than 200 career points in the conference finals and the NBA Finals; the other three teams still in these playoffs have two such players, combined (Irving and Siakam).

“I think the confidence of a champion. That’s where it starts.”

Irving is truly a rarity in this NBA final four: He has a ring, won with Cleveland in 2016. Almost everyone else left in these playoffs does not. Siakam was on the Raptors team in 2019 that won it all, Dallas’ Markieff Morris was on the Lakers team that won in 2020 and Holiday was on the Bucks’ title team in 2021. The pressure ramps up now. It’ll ramp up again on June 6 when the NBA Finals start. It shall be seen which of the young stars are ready to take the last — and biggest — step.

“Thanks for calling me old,” Siakam said after Minnesota ousted Denver in Game 7 on Sunday. The Celtics were supposed to be here; they were the favorites entering the season and are bigger (-150) favorites now. Dallas was +4500 to win the title at one point this season; the Mavericks are +500 now, according to BetMGM Sportsbook. Minnesota started the year at +6600; the Wolves are now +260.

It’s high-stakes games and it’s going to be crazier as we go,” Siakam said of playing at this time of year. “But I think as long as we stay together, we have a great group of guys … I think that we can lean on each other. They can lean on me for experience. I can lean on them just continuing to learn how to play with them. We’ve just got to go out there and play and believe that it’s possible.”

Experience, right now, surely favors Boston. The Celtics have five players (Brown, Tatum, Horford, Holiday and Derrick White) with more than 200 career points in the conference finals and the NBA Finals; the other three teams still

Associated Press

Former Red Sox pitcher arrested in Florida in an underage sex sting, sheriff says

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — Former Boston Red Sox pitcher Austin Maddox was arrested in Florida as part of an underage sex sting, authorities announced Monday. Maddox was one of 27 people arrested as part of a multi-agency operation late last month, Jacksonville Sheriff T.K. Waters said. They are accused of soliciting sex over the internet from people who they believed were children, officials said.

James Hill, a defense attorney for Maddox, said he intends to fight the allegations against him and will enter a plea of not guilty should formal charges be filed.

Maddox, 33, began communicating with an undercover agent pretending to be an underage girl on April 28, an arrest report said. He expressed his intent to have sex with the girl even after she told him that she was 14, officials said.

Maddox agreed to meet the girl at a pre-arranged location, where he was arrested by law enforcement officers, authorities said.

He is charged with four felony counts, including traveling to meet after using a computer to solicit a child. He is being held in jail on a $300,000 bond.

Maddox played college ball for the University of Florida and was drafted by the Boston Red Sox in 2012. He made his major league debut with the team in 2017 after several years in the minors. He spent about three months on the Red Sox roster before heading back to the minors to recover from shoulder injuries. He was released from the team in 2019.

Associated Press

Austin Maddox of the Boston Red Sox baseball team shown Feb. 19, 2017, in Fort Myers, Fla.