THE CORONADO NEWS

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USS Carl Vinson helps derail Houthi attacks

The carrier was rerouted to the Middle East by President Trump to help the USS Harry S. Truman against attacks by the Iranian-backed political and military group

BY MADELINE YANG
The Coronado News

A Coronado-based aircraft carrier, the USS Carl Vinson, along with the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group, has been integral in impeding attacks from the Houthis in Yemen, decreasing missile launches by more than two-thirds and attack drones by more than half, according to an April 27 U.S. Central Command (Centcom) release.

Since the start of the operation, the carriers have struck over 800 targets, destroying air defense systems, advanced weapons manufacturing facilities and command-and-control stations.

President Donald Trump said on May 6 that the United States will end airstrikes on Houthi militants.

U.S. strikes have also "destroyed the ability of Ras Isa Port to accept fuel which will begin to impact Houthi ability to not only conduct operations, but also to generate millions of dollars in revenue for their terror activities," Centcom said.

Ras Isa Port is a fuel port in Yemen and is the second-largest oil terminal in the country. It was one of the main entry points for imported fuel into Houthi-controlled territory before being struck down by the U.S. military.

"These strikes have killed hundreds of Houthi fighters and numerous Houthi leaders," Centcom relayed. "We are extremely proud of our well-trained and professional forces as they have effectively delivered precise and lethal strikes against Houthi military capabilities."

The operations were conducted by a "robust assembly of forces," including the Carl Vinson and the USS Harry S. Truman and their respective strike groups. The Carl Vinson was diverted last month from the Indo-Pacific region where it normally operates in the Red Sea to support the attacks.

An F/A-18E Super Hornet, attached to Strike Fighter Squadron 192, prepares for launch while another launches from the flight deck of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. *Official U.S. Navy photo.*

A general view of the exterior façade of the new headquarters of Veolia, the leader group in environmental services (water, cleanliness, transport, energy and green spaces), during a press visit on Jan. 23, 2017 in Aubervilliers, France. *Photo by Vincent Isore/IP3/Getty Images.*

VEOLIA

A look at the track record of a mega-corporation operating the border sewage plant

Amid local lawsuits, the world's largest water and sewage company portrays itself as an environmental advocate while critics paint it as a bad corporate citizen

BY DENNIS WAGNER
The Coronado News

A mid beach closure signs and a stench of human waste, there are at least two ways to perceive Veolia, the corporation that operates a border sewage treatment plant at the center of San Diego County's coastal pollution crisis.

From a critic's viewpoint – as expressed in courtrooms and by industry watchdogs — the French conglomerate is an international behemoth that puts profits over the environment and public health. The company's subsidiaries have been repeatedly sued and sanctioned by regulatory agencies over contaminated water, unlawful waste disposal and other violations.

After a 2015 sewage spill in Massachusetts, the state's attorney general, Maura Healey, denounced the French firm, declared: "By failing to properly maintain and operate wastewater treatment facilities, companies like Veolia are not only violating the law, they are threatening public health and our invaluable coastal water resources."

Veolia answers with a second point of view. The company says it is exactly the opposite of a polluter – an enterprise whose mission is to protect the planet and humanity from toxic and disgusting wastes.

"We are a strong and forceful corporate citizen on the side of cleaning up the world's problems," said Adam Lisberg, senior vice president for communications with Veolia North America. "That's the work we do. We clean up the world's messes, and we do it well."

Those polar perspectives are likely to clash in San Diego courtrooms as Veolia faces at least five lawsuits over its maintenance and operation of a border wastewater plant that has been unable to prevent Tijuana sewage from flowing into the Pacific and onto local beaches.

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'We can do better': Local nonprofit provides mental health care for military families

After a chance encounter on the Coronado Bridge with a person in crisis, Crystal Bettenhausen-Bubulka — social worker, military spouse and mother — founded a nonprofit to confront the shortcomings of the mental health system and reimagine connection for those who serve

BY KATIE MORRIS
The Coronado News

It was just after sunset when Crystal Bettenhausen-Bubulka found herself driving back to Coronado with her 19-year-old daughter, Tayah, asleep in the passenger seat and her husband on speakerphone.

They'd spent the day in Los Angeles in April 2023 — part college info session, part prom dress shopping — and the gentle lull of the road might have made for a quiet return.

» Continued on Page 9

Crystal Bettenhausen-Bubulka presented "Fostering Connection in Transitions" at the 2025 Military Mental Health Conference in Fort Ripley, MN.

Photo provided by Crystal Bettenhausen-Bubulka.

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this week

10 • Saturday

The Coronado Democratic Club will host a meeting on May 10 at 10:30 a.m. in the Winn room of the Coronado Public Library. The meeting will feature a dual program, welcoming award-winning journalist Lorie Hearn, representatives from the Citizens Casualty Awareness Training team, and a brief update on the important work of InclusioNado by Marely Ramirez and Nina Smart.

11 • Sunday

From 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Coronado Historical Association will be hosting the annual Mother's Day Historic Home Tour, where participants can walk through historic homes in Coronado. Tickets can be purchased at coronadohistory.org.

12 • Monday

Once a month, local entrepreneur Jon Pollock hosts "The Forum," a time for local business owners and leaders from diverse types of companies to discuss business and personal challenges. Current forum members hail from a wide range of industries, including real estate, software development, construction, staffing and more. A different member hosts the meeting at their place of business each month. The group is currently looking for new members. Prospects are interviewed and must be approved by the group. For more information, contact Jon Pollock at jonp@trioltd.com.

CONTACT US

For news tips, story submissions and letters to the editor, contact Editor Sofie Fransen at sofie@thecoronadonews.com or 619-990-8465.

To advertise contact Ad Executive Braeden Stegman at braeden@numbersix.com

THINGS TO DO

Coronado Art and Wine Festival returns for fourth year

Coronado News staff

The Coronado Art and Wine Festival is returning for its fourth year, transforming 10th Street and Orange Avenue into a lively outdoor gallery and wine-tasting experience.

The event, hosted by the Coronado Schools Foundation and the Coronado Chamber of Commerce, will take place on May 10 from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Over 100 local and international artists will showcase their work in a variety of mediums. And three distinct wine-tasting areas will offer curated selections of wines from California wineries, paired with bites from top Coronado restaurants.

The main stage will feature live music, including performances by local bands and Coronado students. Families can enjoy the interactive "Kid Art-opia" zone, filled with hands-on arts and craft activities.

"This year's festival is sure to be our biggest and best year yet," said Ashley DeGree, president and CEO of the Coronado Schools Foundation. "We can't wait to highlight our amazingly talented students, from displaying their art in the school booths to showcasing their performances on stage. We encourage all of our Coronado families to come and be amazed!"

The festival is free to attend. Those 21 and over can purchase tickets to get access to the three wine-tasting areas. Tickets can be purchased at eventbrite.com.

The Coronado Art and Wine festival will return on May 10. *Photo provided by the Coronado Chamber of Commerce.*

Meet Pretzel, the pet of the week. She's at PAWS of Coronado and is looking for her forever home. See all adoptable animals. Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera, and tap on the link. *Graphic/photo provided by PAWS of Coronado.*

PET OF THE WEEK

Meet Pretzel

PAWS of Coronado

Pretzel is a two-year-old black German Shepherd with a heart as soft as her fur and a twisty little personality that suits her name just right.

Just like the classic snack, Pretzel is the perfect mix of sweet and salty: sweet in the way she gently leans in for cuddles, and just a little salty with her playful, sassy side that keeps everyone smiling.

With her soft, sleek fur and big, expressive eyes, she turns heads wherever she goes, but it's her loyal heart and goofy personality that truly makes her unforgettable.

Pretzel loves going on adventures, curling up in silly nap poses, and being your shadow through thick and thin. She's looking for a forever home where she can twist her way right into your heart!

All animals at PAWS are spayed/neutered, microchipped, vaccinated and up to date on flea prevention. Adoptions are by appointment only. If you are interested in adopting Pretzel or other pets, please visit pawsofcoronado.org.

When someone is having a stroke, getting treatment quickly is crucial. **Sharp Coronado Hospital** is proud to be a nationally designated Primary Stroke Center.

For Coronado residents, this means advanced stroke care is close to home. Our exceptional care team provides specialized stroke treatment from the moment patients arrive at the emergency room and throughout their stay and recovery.

Learn more about stroke awareness and prevention at a free seminar presented by Sharp Coronado and the Coronado Fire Department on Thursday, May 15, at 2 p.m. at the Spreckels Center. Call 619-522-7343 to register.

If you think that you or someone else may be experiencing a stroke, call 911.

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OUR STORY

"Once Upon A Time" my son and I were discussing solar systems over lunch. Being licensed electricians, we were familiar with Solar Applications and its advantages.

After conducting a fair amount of research, we determined that Solar Technology had advanced to the point that adding a Solar Panel to the roof of a golf cart could significantly add to the travel range, as well as several other advantages including Green Movement Tax Credits.

I had recently moved to a golf cart community and purchased a cart of my own, after installing the best and most powerful system available, the concept of installing Solar Panels on golf carts was conceived.

We began spreading the word to our friends who owned electric carts and began installing Solar Panels on their carts in our spare time out of our garage in Oceanside, CA. Due to the publicized acceptance and popularity in Beach Communities of San Diego County, we decided to expand the business even further. Many beach cities have permitted the use of golf carts in 35 mph zones and are expanding Bike Lanes to 7 feet wide to accommodate their use.

So, there you have it. There is more to the story and we would love to discuss it with you while we install your Solar Panels on your cart.

We took the concept of Green Solar Energy and put it to practical use to lessen the carbon footprint.

We look forward to meeting you soon.

Richard Stachowicz
Ride All Day Solar Carts
Owner and Coronado Resident

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Make the Earth Happy. Solar energy is clean. No carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere as it is when batteries are plugged into the wall to charge. Similarly, no fossil fuels are consumed as they are in gas-powered golf carts. The sun's energy is both clean and renewable. With their renewable, clean energy and lack of generated pollution, solar charged golf carts are an Earth-friendly option. You can help ensure that golf courses will be around for a very long time.

FINANCIAL BENEFITS

While it can be costly up front to buy a solar-powered golf cart or convert your existing cart to solar, in the long run, you might save money. You might be eligible for cost incentives offered to people who go solar. Some programs include:

- Federal tax credits
- Federal grants
- State and local utility tax credits
- Rebates

Together, these can help make solar power an affordable option for your golf cart. Additionally, you will likely save quite a bit of money on your electricity bill without having an electric vehicle drawing from your home's electricity supply. Individuals aren't the only ones who benefit monetarily from solar power. When entire golf courses convert their fleets to solar-powered vehicles, they can slash their annual charging costs by about 20 percent. Whether you want to enhance the performance of your golf cart, help the environment, or save money in the long run, you're sure to benefit from changing your power to the sun.

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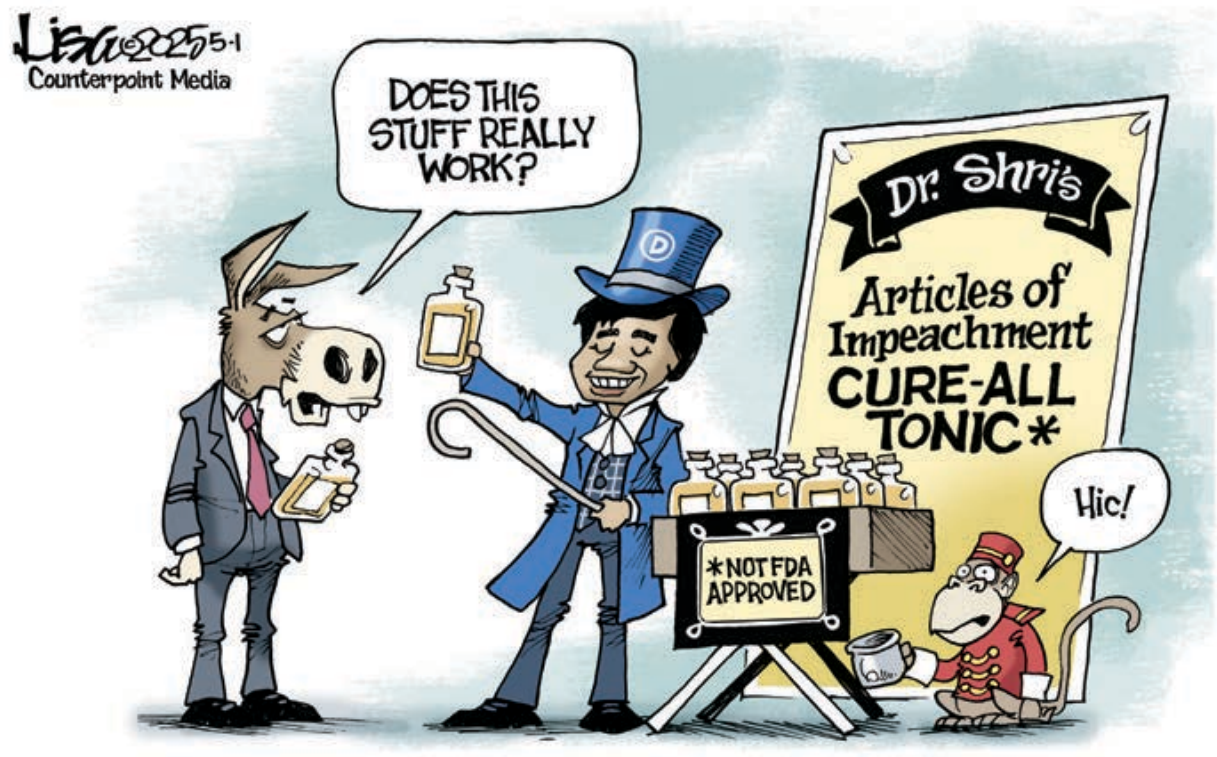
OPINION

LISA BENSON



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CORONADO

Local leaders ask President Trump to declare emergency for ongoing cross-border pollution

This request comes days after EPA chief landed in San Diego and witnessed the sewage pollution crisis

BY JULIETA SOTO
The Coronado News

San Diego leaders are asking President Donald Trump to declare a federal state of emergency in hopes of accelerating an infrastructure project in the U.S. that could bring relief to communities suffering from the cross-border sewage pollution from Tijuana.

"We cannot wait for traditional permitting and review processes while children get sick, businesses suffer, and San Diego's coast is devastated," says a letter from April 30 written by regional officials. "Please declare a federal state of emergency now."

This request was addressed to Trump one week after EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin visited San Diego to see the Tijuana River sewage crisis first hand. He participated in a binational meeting with Mexico, toured sewage infrastructure, welcomed local elected officials — including Coronado Mayor John Duncan — for a roundtable discussion and heard from Navy SEALs about how the crisis affects training and operations.

"Mr. Zeldin's visit marked a key step forward. Now, urgent executive action is needed," said Imperial Beach Mayor Paloma Aguirre, San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria, National City Mayor Ron Morrison and Terra Lawson-Remer, acting chair of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, in the letter.

The officials asked Trump to expedite expansion of the South Bay International Treatment Plant to reduce wastewater flows coming across the U.S.-Mexico border. The San Diego plant, owned by the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission, treats sewage from Tijuana because Mexico has not built infrastructure to handle its wastes. But even that facility cannot handle the volume, so sewage routinely flows into the ocean and pollutes the shoreline at Coronado and Imperial Beach.

"We understand Mexico's new San Antonio de Los Buenos Wastewater Treatment Plant is completed and weeks away from coming online," the letter continues. "This key infrastructure fix will treat 18 million gallons/day of toxic sewage, but the U.S. government must do its part too."

Mexico's new treatment plant

The letter says more than 31 billion gallons of raw sewage from Mexico have contaminated local beaches and made local residents sick since 2023.

During his visit, Zeldin said Mexican leaders informed him of completed projects south of the border, including the San Antonio de los Buenos Wastewater Treatment Plant.

After years of being inoperable, the Mexican Army completed the plant's construction which is now expected to treat 18 million gallons per day before entering the Pacific Ocean about six miles south of Tijuana.

During his visit, Zeldin said he was finalizing a comprehensive list of things that U.S. stakeholders consider necessary to end the crisis.

Zeldin said a statement from the U.S. and Mexico about updated plans to address the cross border crisis would follow a mutual agreement.

An agreement has not been announced by the federal environmental agency, nor has the list of projects.

On April 30, the EPA announced actions the agency has accomplished during the current White House Administration's first 100 days.

No. 1 on the list said the agency "issued immediate action items for Mexico to permanently end the Tijuana River sewage crisis."

The agency did not indicate whether that issuance contained the steps Zeldin referred to during his Southern California visit.

Also on that list was a $165,000 award to San Diego Air Pollution Control District for air filters and $1.26M for hydrogen sulfide monitoring to address air quality at the border and concerns with sewage odors along the Tijuana River.

During that week, the district announced thousands of free air purifiers were still available for Imperial Beach, San Ysidro, Otay Mesa households.

"EPA is actively having conversations with Mexican officials to achieve 100% solution to the decades long Tijuana River Sewage Crisis," wrote the EPA press office in an email on May 1.

Pedestrians walk along Coronado's Central Beach past signs warning the public to check online for water quality levels due to sewage pollutants.
Staff photo by Madeline Yang.

Veolia: A look at the track record of a mega-corporation operating the border sewage plant

» Continued from Page 1

Veolia critics and defenders seem to agree on at least one point: The corporation is the world's largest private enterprise focusing on water, energy, wastes and transportation.

With 218,000 employees working at scores of wholly-owned subsidiaries, Veolia manages desalinization plants in Africa, disposes nuclear waste in Japan, delivers water in China, collects residential garbage in England… And, in San Diego, it gets paid to treat Tijuana crap, pee and industrial contaminants.

That last contract is the subject of lawsuits from an array of plaintiffs: Coronado Unified School District, the city of Imperial Beach, the San Diego Coastkeeper conservation group, and private citizens along the coastline from Coronado to Mexico.

The civil complaints stem from Veolia's operation of the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant. Plaintiffs assert that, at least in part due to negligence by Veolia, more than 100 billion gallons of raw sewage have flowed into the ocean over the past five years. They contend more than 500 illegal discharges have sickened local residents, fouled the air, shut down beaches, sabotaged property values and damaged businesses.

"Defendants acted recklessly and with conscious disregard to human life and safety," alleges the suit by Coronado public schools. "…This is despicable and oppressive conduct, especially considering defendants' knowledge that plaintiffs – vulnerable, innocent and unsuspecting children – would have to suffer the consequences…"

Veolia, in turn, says it is merely a contractor operating a facility that is owned by the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), a federal agency that failed to maintain and expand the plant as Tijuana's population and sewage production exploded.

Veolia argues it is not to blame for gravity that carries Tijuana's wastes across the border. Or for storm events that overwhelm the treatment plant's capacity. Or for the fact that Tijuana's other major sewage plant was inoperative for years.

Lisberg said almost all of the raw sewage entering the ocean from the Tijuana River channel flows around the South Bay plant, not through it. In heavy rain periods, he asserted, the IBWC has instructed Veolia to close incoming collectors so the facility won't be overwhelmed and forced to shut down entirely.

"We're following the orders established by the plant owner," Lisberg said. "As the operator, we've always done the best we could considering that IBWC did not keep up maintenance and capital investments in the past…

"The way to solve the sewage problem is to have Mexico crack down on it. To have Mexico actually treat it."

From there, arguments devolve into a confusion of law, engineering, history and politics – issues we'll get back to later.

So, which is it? Is Veolia a corporate white knight cleansing the world? An international bad actor? Or something in between?

This primary sediment tank at the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant, which is operated by Veolia North America, is overloaded with trash. The role of the tank is to remove solids from the wastewater. *Staff photo by Madeline Yang.*

Veolia's history

As Veolia tells the story, it started in 1853 with a decree from Napoleon III authorizing the creation of a private water company in Lyon, France, known as Compagnie Generale des Eaux. Soon, the business was supplying water in other cities, from Paris to Nice.

During that period, other French companies formed to clear city streets of trash and horse manure, operate sewer systems, run trolleys and provide heat for buildings. More than a century later, in the 1980s, those divergent businesses had merged under the banner of Compagnie Generale des Eaux.

In 1998, the conglomerate was renamed Vivendi Environnement. Five years later, it took on a new brand: Veolia Environnement.

The name is derived from Aeolus, a ruler of the winds in Greek mythology. According to a Veolia filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, "It evokes the company's fresh impetus and its commitment to the sustainable development of the planet, a key concept for the future, which means abiding by key ethical principles…"

Today, having absorbed many competitors, Veolia Environnement is the world's largest and oldest water company, doing business in 44 countries on five continents. It provides drinking water to 111 million people and sanitation for 98 million. Its mission, as spelled out in a 2023 strategic plan, sounds like that of an environmental nonprofit: "…fighting the climate crisis, treating pollution, optimizing resources and improving quality of life."

But Veolia also is a business, with a stock listing as VEOEY. In 2024, the company reported total revenues of $48.9 billion dollars – greater than the gross national product of countries such as Sudan and Bolivia.

The subsidiary in San Diego presumably has contributed to that sum, taking in at least $88.9 million for operating and maintaining the international wastewater treatment plant, according to contracts covering the past decade.

A mess in Michigan

In 2015, Veolia was hired as a municipal water consultant for Flint, Mich., shortly after a major change in the city's supply system.

Despite complaints from citizens, state and local officials insisted the water was safe. But investigators ultimately determined that engineering changes had leached lead into the system, and testing verified disastrous levels of the toxic metal in consumers' blood. Especially perilous for children, lead poisoning can lead to learning disabilities and behavioral problems.

The ensuing legal and political scandal led to several lawsuits featuring Veolia as a defendant along with the plant operator, Lockwood, Andrews and Newnam (LAN). In February, Veolia settled the last of those cases for $53 million, bringing its total payout to over $79 million. The settlement contained no admission of wrongdoing, and Veolia portrayed itself as a victim in news releases.

"For the past eight years, we have been defending our work and our reputation against baseless attacks," the company asserted. "…The Flint water crisis was caused by government officials. It is a disgrace that nearly a decade plus since the crisis was set in motion, still no person who was actually responsible has been held accountable."

By contrast, then Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette told reporters that Veolia and LAN had "failed miserably in their job — basically botched it, didn't stop the water in Flint from being poisoned. They made it worse, that's what they did."

The litigation included a federal court finding that Veolia was involved in a bizarre propaganda campaign during the litigation.

According to an order issued last year by U.S. District Judge Judith Levy, a public relations firm was hired on behalf of Veolia to discredit an attorney representing Flint victims. Posing as journalists, PR firm employees allegedly contacted plaintiffs in the case — including a child — and tried to "stoke outrage" against the lawyer. Amid a hearing about that campaign, the judge found, the same firm arranged for a truck to drive around the federal courthouse blaring "attacks on the lawyer, quoting obscene language."

The Flint water plant tower is seen on Jan. 6, 2022, in Flint, Mich. A judge declared a mistrial Thursday, Aug. 11, after jurors said they couldn't reach a verdict in a dispute over whether two engineering firms should bear some responsibility for Flint's lead-contaminated water. Four families accused Veolia North America and Lockwood, Andrews & Newman, known as LAN, of not doing enough to get Flint to treat the highly corrosive water or to urge a return to a regional water supplier. *AP Photo/Carlos Osorio, File.*

The court order says Veolia's parent company in France refused to provide information about those incidents. The judge filed a Bar complaint against an American attorney who represented the public relations company.

Lisberg, the Veolia vice president, declined to comment on the court findings.

A litany of problems

The dispute in Flint was not an isolated case, or a new one.

Environmental organizations, consumer watchdogs, citizen groups and media outlets have put out critical reports about Veolia for decades.

In 2013, Food and Water Watch published a critique of Veolia operations in the U.S. citing a litany of alleged problems — contract violations, boil-water edicts, lawsuits and billing issues — in more than a half-dozen cities.

Wastewater flows into the Pacific Ocean from an arroyo near Mexico's sewage treatment plant at Punta Bandera, six miles south of Tijuana. *Photo by Dennis Wagner.*

A year later, the nonprofit Corporate Accountability issued a scathing evaluation of Veolia and another firm, Suez, which Veolia subsequently absorbed.

"Private water corporations like Suez and Veolia rely on political interference and misleading marketing at every level of government to expand their market in the U.S.," concluded the authors.

Among the many international examples listed by critics:

- In 2019, the World Bank issued a bar against two Veolia entities after finding that the companies engaged in "fraudulent and collusive practices " while competing for a project in Colombia. According to the bank, the subsidiaries acknowledged wrongdoing as part of a settlement.
- In Lithuania, the country's energy ministry sued Veolia and another French company in 2020 seeking $240 million euros for allegedly illegal efforts to secure lease contracts for municipal heating businesses. An international arbitration court eventually ordered Veolia and another company to pay $61.5 million

Free air purifiers still available for Imperial Beach, San Ysidro, Otay Mesa households

Homes with a 91932, 92173 or 92154 zip code can check eligibility online

BY JULIETA SOTO
The Coronado News

The Tijuana River flows under the road on Saturn Boulevard in San Diego, traveling through multiple pipes and creating sewage-polluted standing ponds of water mixed with foam. The sewage contamination is causing hydrogen sulfide odors for residents in the area. Air purifiers are available for those who apply. *Staff photo by Julieta Soto.*

The San Diego County Air Pollution Control District continues its distribution of air purifiers to residential households near the Tijuana River Valley, which is being overwhelmed by hydrogen sulfide odors as a result of toxic sewage contaminating the river and Pacific Ocean.

Latest numbers show 7,000 purifiers are available for south San Diego County residents. Those living in Imperial Beach, San Ysidro, Otay Mesa, Egger Highlands, Nestor and the Tijuana River Valley are eligible to apply for air filtration devices online at https://filters.sdapcd.org/.

One online application, that takes less than five minutes to complete and is available in five languages, is being accepted per household. Proof of residency is required along with a name and address. Priority distribution will be given to households with children and individuals over 65 years of age, as well as communities closest to the Tijuana River Valley, according to the district's program website.

The program website says households that previously received a filter from the Air Improvement Relief Effort program, or the county's 2024 Air Purifier Pilot Program, are not eligible.

Selectees will receive one air purifier and a replacement filter, shipped by the manufacturer, in a four to six week timeframe.

The district's Air Improvement Relief Effort program launched in early February with the goal of distributing 10,000 air purifiers containing potassium permanganate, a compound that specifically helps filter hydrogen sulfide.

Since the program's inception, the district has received 4,000 applications and distributed over 2,500 air purifiers to eligible households. On April 28, the district expected to ship out an additional 500 air purifiers in the coming days.

"Our goal is to provide some relief to impacted residents during these periods of potential increased odors," said Paula Forbis, the district's air pollution control officer, in a statement. "That's why we are urging residents to apply now."

Call (858) 586-2779 or email filters@sdapcd.org for any questions about the program and application process.

euros to the city of Vilnius while also transferring another 21.5 million euros worth of assets.

- In Lanzhou, China, at least four lawsuits were filed in 2015 against a Veolia water company over smelly tap water. According to the Centre for East Asian Studies, the water contained levels of the toxic solvent, benzene, in amounts 20 times higher than the national limit. The chairman of Veolia's China subsidiary issued a public apology, acknowledging that benzene had infiltrated tap water in the city of 3.6 million.

In 2023, Global Witness reported on a "toxic landfill" in Colombia. According to the environmental organization, Veolia acquired the dump in 2019 from another company that had allowed arsenic, mercury and other contaminants to infiltrate food and water sources for a nearby community. The result, according to Global Witness: Infants began displaying "serious and novel afflictions, including cases of babies being born without a brain and dying at birth."

Veolia purchased the landfill two years after Colombian courts ordered a cleanup – including construction of an aqueduct to safeguard the neighbors. The judicial order had not been carried out after six years, and local leaders who complained were threatened by paramilitary groups.

"Whilst there is no evidence to suggest that Veolia or its predecessor commissioned extrajudicial threats or violence, Global Witness urges Veolia to address the full range of harms suffered by the community and defenders who have spoken out against the landfill," the report concluded.

Issues in the United States

Closer to home, Violation Tracker – a website that logs environmental sanctions against companies in the United States – lists more than $85 million in penalties levied against Veolia entities since 2000.

Among the domestic examples:

- In Plymouth, Mass., a Veolia subsidiary was sued for allegedly failing to properly maintain and operate the community's wastewater system, allowing raw sewage to contaminate the town and Plymouth Harbor. Those spills prompted the denunciation from Healey, the attorney general. News reports and an online copy of the settlement indicate Veolia paid the city $21 million.
- In 2022, the California Department of Toxic Substance Control issued a $275,000 fine for permit violations at a Veolia transport operation in San Diego and a recycling plant in Azusa. State records list multiple infractions involving oil and solvents over a four-year period ending in 2020, including illegal storage, failure to control or report leaks and unlawful disposal.
- In Pennsylvania, the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority sued Veolia in 2016, claiming lead levels escalated in tap water after the company switched to a cheaper corrosion-control chemical without regulatory approval. According to Corporate Accountability, "Veolia walked away with over $11 million from its management contracts in Pittsburgh, while local officials were left to find hundreds of millions of dollars to replace pipes."

A corporate rebuttal

Lisberg, Veolia's vice president, acknowledged that subsidiaries sometimes face lawsuits and regulatory sanctions. However, he suggested, that is hardly surprising for such a mammoth corporation, and it does not reflect a pattern or practice of misconduct.

"Our entire business is cleaning up problems that have been caused by other bad actors," Lisberg said. "Every time we fall short, we try to do better. But, generally speaking, our track record is incredibly strong…

"Our whole business is ecological transformation. We aim to be a benchmark for how to do that well… Our people all over the globe are working their tails off."

Robin Kundis Craig, a distinguished professor at the University of Kansas School of Law, agreed that an enormous worldwide brand in environmentally sensitive areas is bound to face lawsuits, public complaints and government sanctions.

The challenge, Craig said, is discerning whether such a conglomerate is a flawed corporate citizen.

In the case of Veolia, she added, events in Flint and the World Bank decision may be indicators.

"I think a dispassionate evaluation of Veolia worldwide is that it's checkered," said Craig, who has written about the Tijuana sewage crisis. "It's been good at turning a profit."

Tijuana's sewage legacy

Just about everyone involved with the border sewage controversy agrees on three points: The volume of pollution is massive – more than 100 billion gallons in the past five years. The stew of pathogens and toxins is filthy dangerous. And the mess is hardly new.

In fact, Mexican sewage has been contaminating south San Diego County beaches since the 1930s.

Tijuana's booming population produces the sewage and industrial wastes. And Mexico's lack of infrastructure releases liquid miasma into the sea, where northbound currents ferry contaminants to Imperial Beach and Coronado.

In 1934, the International Boundary and Water Commission was assigned to solve the problem. As documented by The Coronado News in a 2023 report, efforts over the decades failed for myriad reasons.

Finally, in the late 1990s, the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant was touted as an ambitious solution. A primary treatment facility was completed in 1997, with secondary treatment finished in 2011. That project, including collector lines and an ocean outfall, cost $256 million, with Mexico covering less than seven percent of the total.

Infrastructure was designed to treat 25 million gallons of Tijuana wastewater per day when fully operational. But, during heavy rains, sewage, runoff and sediments overwhelm and clog the system, sending millions of gallons to sea without treatment. (Meanwhile, a Mexican wastewater plant six miles south of the border at San Antonio de los Buenos went defunct years ago, constantly spewing more raw sewage into the ocean. It purportedly was repaired this year.)

The U.S. section of the IBWC owns the South Bay facility, with Veolia Water West Operating Services Inc. as its contractor. In return for about $8.5 million annually, the company oversees the main plant, an ocean outfall and associated pumps and canyon collectors.

That responsibility includes maintenance where the cost of a repair is less than $100,000. In the past five years, according to IBWC, Veolia has been paid an additional $14.4 million to fix and replace equipment.

Contract requirements

Veolia has operated the plant from the beginning.

The most recent five-year contract, adopted in 2020, says the company "shall be responsible for complying with all governmental agencies having jurisdiction permits and requirements."

A failure to perform could result in payment deductions – even contract termination.

For example, Veolia faces a penalty of $15,000 per month for each noncompliance with laws, permits or court orders if that failure is due to negligence or poor performance.

Another clause calls for deductions of $10,000 per month if the company does not maintain equipment to a "fully operational condition."

Finally, the contract contains extensive requirements for Veolia to report and clean up all spills.

Lawsuits against Veolia point to those provisions in claiming that the company is at least partially to blame for massive releases of untreated Tijuana sewage.

The civil complaints

In 2018, Imperial Beach, Chula Vista and the San Diego Unified Port District sued Veolia and IBWC — alleging unlawful discharges and public endangerment. Plaintiffs said they had "beseeched the government through political, diplomatic, regulatory and administrative avenues" to stop the pollution, to no avail.

"Defendants falsely herald their past achievements while the pollution…grows more and more," the plaintiffs added. "Defendants have utterly failed to fulfill their legal and moral mandates."

At least four more suits filed within the past year are mass tort cases initiated on behalf of south San Diego County residents, initiated by private law firms: Singleton Schreiber LLP, the Law Offices of Stephen B. Morris, and Frantz Law Group, which also represents Coronado Unified School District.

The latter suit claims Veolia "made a conscious and deliberate choice to risk the lives and health of the children…while (company) officers, directors and managing agents all decided to pay themselves substantial salaries on the backs of American taxpayers…"

"It's just outrageous," attorney James Frantz said in an interview. "And they're trying to blame Mexico? They're the ones operating this plant."

Knut Johnson, a lawyer representing Imperial Beach residents, said Veolia has been paid more than $100 million for operating the South Bay plant over the past decade, yet contends others are responsible for the pollution.

"Veolia happily cashes their multimillion checks every year and says, 'We can't do anything about it,'" he added.

Finally, a civil complaint by two nonprofits – San Diego Coastkeeper and the Coastal Environmental Rights Foundation – claims Veolia and IBWC caused an "ecological disaster" through underfunding, neglect and poor management.

Their suit says ocean discharges from the South Bay plant's outfall have violated Clean Water Act and national permits 500 times — including 130 notices for the toxic pesticide, DDT, and other extremely hazardous chemicals that are banned in the United States.

In one incident, the plaintiffs allege, levels of the enterococcus pathogen measured 45,000 times greater than the permit's specification. Coastkeeper is seeking an injunction to stop the pollution, plus civil damages.

IBWC isn't blaming Veolia

All of which raises key questions: If Veolia's contract stipulates penalties for failure to maintain the plant — and for violating permits or laws – why hasn't the IBWC sued the company? Or penalized it for alleged contract breaches?

In an email exchange, Frank Fisher, public affairs chief for the U.S. boundary commission, said litigation precludes him from commenting on whether Veolia has diligently complied with its contract.

When asked if IBWC has threatened contract cancellation or sanctioned the company for noncompliance, Fisher responded, "Nothing regarding the current contract."

On the other hand, publicly available evidence does not indicate Veolia warned the boundary commission that its South Bay plant was failing or inadequate.

» Continued on Page 8

Veolia: A look at the track record of a mega-corporation operating the border sewage plant

» Continued from Page 7

A five-year capital improvement plan prepared by the company in 2020 does not call for repairs costing hundreds of millions of dollars. Instead, it lists necessary work of $11.5 million, with no language suggesting that the facility faced catastrophic problems.

Lisberg, Veolia's national spokesman, said warning communiques to IBWC would constitute "internal documents," and it is up to the commission to release them.

Fisher, the IBWC public affairs chief, supplied one Veolia letter from Jan. 27 of this year calling for "urgent actions" to replace grit-removal equipment at the plant. He said there may be other communiques, but it would take time to locate them.

Veolia's argument

Lisberg said the fact that IBWC has not sued or penalized his company – or canceled the contract – suggests that "criticisms in those lawsuits are not valid."

In court, meanwhile, Veolia has countered civil complaints with a plethora of arguments. Fundamentally, attorneys contend the company "did not assist in or create the pollution, and could not reasonably have abated the pollution."

The South Bay plant does not treat storm runoff or uncontrolled sewage flows in the Tijuana River, the defense asserts, and it has nothing to do with discharges from the broken Mexican plant just south of Tijuana. Yet those are "the most significant sources" of coastal contamination as determined by the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board.

"Veolia is a background player caught in this political battle," corporate lawyers declare in one motion. "...Veolia has not violated any environmental laws and, in fact, has greatly reduced the problem's scale."

In a separate filing, the company identified another main culprit behind pollution of the ocean, river and air along the border: "gravity."

Tijuana is at a higher elevation than San Diego, attorneys noted, and stuff flows downhill. So, because Mexico has failed to build adequate collector and treatment systems, excremental waste winds up on beaches of south San Diego County.

Bottom line: "Veolia has no control over Mexico's inadequate wastewater facilities."

Finally, Veolia lawyers argue, even if the company bears some responsibility for sewage discharges, IBWC shares that blame. "...If any sewage near Imperial Beach resulted from plant operations, the USIBWC – not Veolia – controls plant operational decisions," the company contends in a dismissal motion.

Moreover, the attorneys conclude, the federal commission has immunity from litigation, so Veolia should also be insulated because "awarding damages to plaintiffs while allowing Veolia no redress against the government would be profoundly unfair."

The future

As litigation proceeds, IBWC is pursuing plans to spend upwards of $600 million on repairs and expansion of the South Bay infrastructure, doubling treatment capacity and reducing cross-border sewage flows by up to 90 percent.

Design work and some repairs already are underway on both sides of the border. Maria-Elena Giner, the agency's recently replaced U.S. commissioner, touted progress during a February citizens' forum, saying most of the funding has been secured for the SBIWTP project, and claiming Mexico has completed repairs on the facility at San Antonio de los Buenos.

However, as noted in the 2023 Coronado News series, "Promises, promises," officials for nearly a century have devised remedies and offered similar assurances.

Meanwhile, in the barrios and business districts of Tijuana, a toilet flushes. And another. And another.

It happens about 134 times per second.

James Frantz, of Frantz Law Group, announces a civil complaint on Nov. 18 against Veolia that he filed on behalf of South Bay residents. *Staff photo by Julieta.*

The previous commissioner of the International Boundary and Water Commission, Maria-Elena Giner, spoke about the urgency to fix the dilapidated South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant at a San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board meeting on Sept. 13, 2023. *Staff photo by Madeline Yang.*

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‘We can do better’: Local nonprofit provides mental health care for military families

» Continued from Page 1

As she drove onto the Coronado Bridge, Bettenhausen-Bubulka had no inkling that she was about to have an experience profoundly affecting her future: A car sat dead ahead – no lights, no hazard signals.

“I’m going to stop,” Bettenhausen-Bubulka told her husband, a hint of alarm cutting through the fatigue in her voice. She pulled over.

There was no crash, no chaos. Just a person standing beside the dark sedan at the edge of the bridge, looking toward the water.

Bettenhausen-Bubulka stepped out. Cars zoomed past.

Tayah, now barely awake, got on the line with her dad, then called 911.

Bettenhausen-Bubulka recalled walking up to the individual, who was wearing blue gloves with rings on them.

“Can I hug you?” she asked.

And they embraced.

That moment — human, unbearably heavy — was not the one people passing by chose to witness.

“I remember hugging them,” she said, “and just looking over their shoulder, out into the lane — and all I saw were cell phones. People slowing down to film.”

There was no mistaking what was happening. The person by the water was in crisis.

And while Bettenhausen-Bubulka stood between them and the edge, strangers drove by, more eager to capture a scene than to intervene.

“I was just disgusted by that behavior,” she said. “We all knew this wasn’t a car broken down. But their first reaction was to record it.”

The police arrived, lights flashing. They blocked traffic. Then came the cuffs — standard protocol, Bettenhausen-Bubulka knew, but jarring nonetheless.

“I remember the person saying, ‘Can I get your number?’” Bettenhausen-Bubulka explained. “They said, ‘I just need to talk to somebody.’ And I said, ‘Well, you’re lucky — I’m a social worker.’”

Later, as she sat quietly beside Tayah in the car, the emotional gravity of the moment settled in.

“This is what we do in our country for mental health,” she said. “This is what we do.”

That moment on the bridge didn’t just rattle her. It galvanized her.

In the months that followed, Bettenhausen-Bubulka — already seasoned in hospice care, gerontology and clinical social work — would found Strength in Service, a nonprofit committed to supporting military-affiliated individuals and families through accessible mental health care, social health advocacy and career development for military spouses entering social work.

But the core of the organization — what it does, and why — can be traced back to that night. To the person who needed a hug, and the system that had no better answer than handcuffs.

“I just kept thinking, there has to be more,” she said. “We can do better.”

Beginning next year, a $140 million steel net will be installed along the edges of the Coronado Bridge under a newly approved Caltrans construction project, designed to prevent suicides from the structure.

For Bettenhausen-Bubulka, though, the goal is to intervene before anyone reaches the edge.

Fixing the system

Bettenhausen-Bubulka didn’t begin her career with military families in mind.

She studied gerontology, drawn by a deep respect for older adults she attributes to her Midwestern upbringing and the “amazing grandparents and great-grandparents” who shaped her worldview.

After following her military husband to postings around the globe — including Japan, Bahrain and Hawaii — her lens expanded.

“I kept saying, like, I feel like I need to be doing more,” she recalled. “Like I’m always feeling there’s more to learn and there’s more that I could be doing, and how can I be better for my clients?”

She was living in Hawaii during the pandemic, isolated and homeschooling her children alone while her husband was stationed in Rhode Island.

“It was just so isolating, and at the same time so amazing,” she said. “We had this entire island to ourselves… I did a lot of work on myself.”

It was during this time of personal reflection and professional burnout that Strength in Service began to crystallize.

The organization officially launched in 2024, but its seeds were sown through years of frustration: trying to earn licensure across different states, being dismissed from job opportunities due to her status as a military spouse and encountering the person on the bridge.

That belief — that human connection can save lives — has become the beating heart of Strength in Service, Bettenhausen-Bubulka said.

The organization’s Social Health Advocacy program teaches the science behind social connection.

Its career support initiative helps military spouses navigate complex licensure laws in different states.

According to Military OneSource’s summary of the Department of Defense’s 2021 Survey of Active Duty Spouses, 34% of military spouses work in professions that require licensing, and nearly a third had to secure a new credential simply to continue working after a permanent change of station.

In California, for example, becoming a licensed clinical social worker requires a master’s in social work from an accredited program, registration as an associate clinical social worker, 3,000 hours of supervised experience, passage of two exams and compliance with additional coursework and background checks.

The requirements vary from state to state.

Crystal Bettenhausen-Bubulka (left) and Strength in Service associate social worker Kari deLongpre (right) at the MilSpouseFest Camp Pendleton, where Bettenhausen-Bubulka received the Camp Pendleton Mighty MilSpouse award for the San Diego area.

Photo provided by Crystal Bettenhausen-Bubulka.

A goal to grow

On Feb. 21, the nonprofit held a ribbon-cutting ceremony at its office on Orange Avenue.

Even as the organization’s office becomes a local hub for counseling, Bettenhausen-Bubulka has to prepare for another cross-country military move — this time to Washington, D.C.

Still, she’s keeping her Coronado presence.

“Our goal really is to grow here,” she said. “Especially in San Diego, being… the second largest fleet concentration.”

Bettenhausen-Bubulka is advocating for high school clubs to introduce teens to social work, reimagining how providers are trained and pushing for systemic reform, like reducing the prohibitive costs of clinical supervision and increasing access to mental health care for military families.

But at its core, Bettenhausen-Bubulka said, Strength in Service is about something older and deeper than policy.

It’s about connection — the kind her grandfather found in the 1930s with the Future Farmers of America, the kind she built in Bahrain and Hawaii and the kind she now fosters in Coronado.

“Connection saves lives,” she said. “That’s what I told Mayor [John Duncan] at our ribbon cutting. Let’s solve the issues that lead people to get to the top of the bridge in the first place.”

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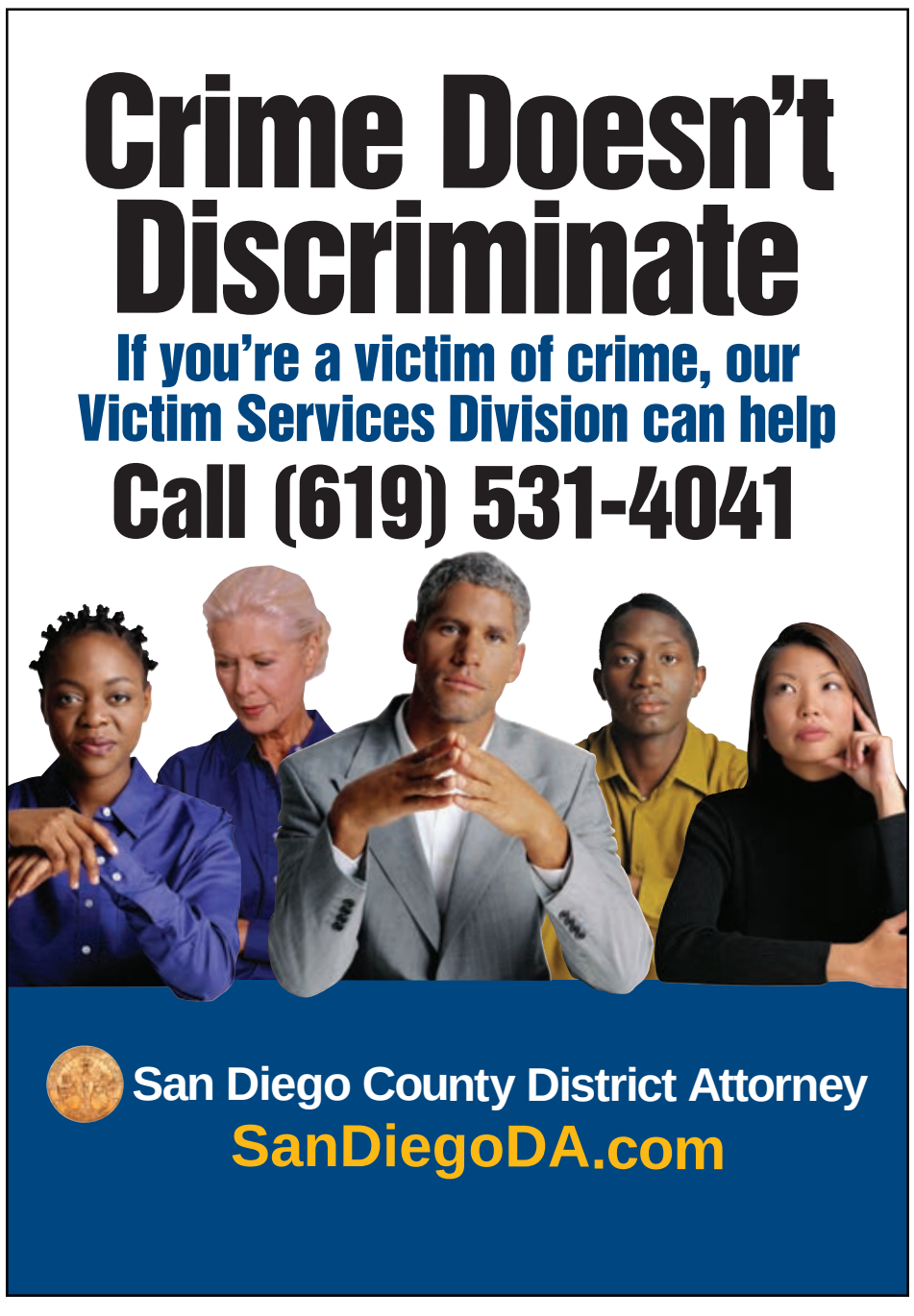

CORONADO

CoSA showcases an evening of dance and filmmaking

Coronado News staff

The Coronado School of the Arts (CoSA) dance conservatory will showcase Envision — an evening of dance and filmmaking at the Coronado Performing Arts Center on Friday, May 16 and Saturday, May 17 at 7 p.m.

The evening of original dances offers a behind-the-scenes peek of dance makers and their creative processes by CoSA digital arts film students. The event also features solo performances from the five graduating seniors.

"In Envision, CoSA Dance invites audiences to peek behind the curtain and witness how dances are made from concept to concert," said Gina Bolles Sorensen, conservatory chair.

Three filmmakers have stepped into the studio to witness CoSA dance makers in the creative process, according to Sorensen. The event features documentary films threaded throughout the program to share insights about how dances are made, complete with interviews with the choreographers and footage of the rehearsal process. One highlight in the program is 'The Point of Vanishing,' a nine-minute dance for the full ensemble, directed by Sorensen.

"The thing about dance is that it's here and gone," said Sorensen. "A dance is never performed or seen the same way twice. We work in an artform that is always in a state of vanishing."

In addition to dances by seven CoSA dance faculty, the program features dances by eleven student choreographers.

Tickets are on sale at cosasandiego.com.

The Coronado School of the Arts will host an evening of original dances on May 16 and 17. *Image provided by the Coronado School of the Arts.*

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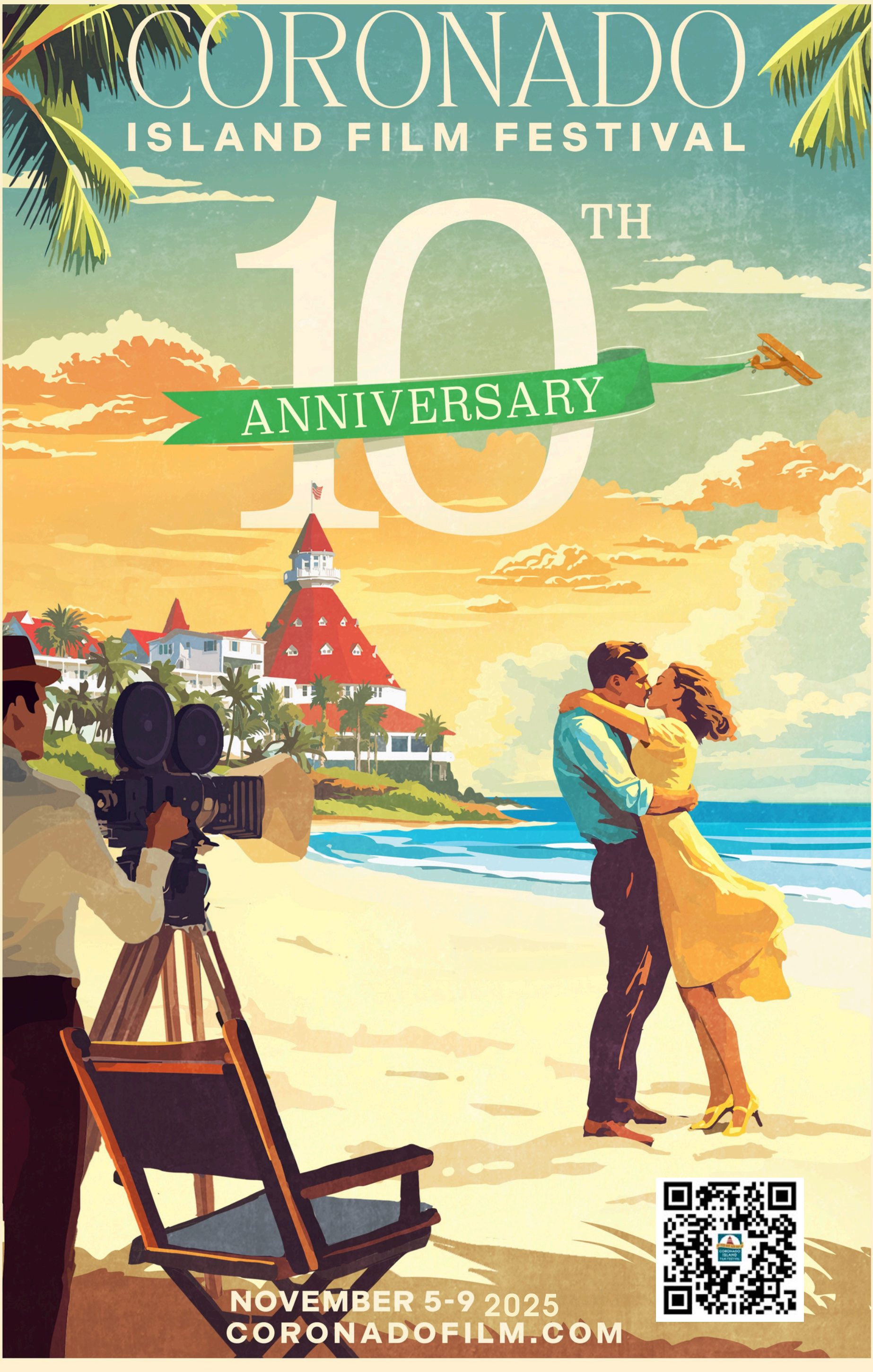

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NAVY

Hegseth keeps two aircraft carriers in Middle East for another week for battle with Yemen's Houthis

Associated Press

Aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman is moored near Split, Croatia, Feb. 14, 2022. *AP Photo/Darko Bandic, File.*

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has ordered the USS Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier to remain in the Middle East for a second time, keeping it there another week so the U.S. can maintain two carrier strike groups in the region to battle Yemen-based Houthi rebels, according to a U.S. official.

President Donald Trump said on May 6 that the United States will end airstrikes on Houthi militants.

In late March, Hegseth extended the deployment of the Truman and the warships in its group for a month as part of a campaign to increase strikes on the Iran-backed Houthis. The official said Hegseth signed the latest order on May 1 and it is expected the Truman and its strike group warships will head home to Norfolk, Virginia, after the week is up.

Gen. Erik Kurilla, head of U.S. Central Command, requested that the Truman be extended again, according to officials. The San Diego-based USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier and its strike group arrived in the region a few weeks ago and are operating in the Gulf of Aden. The Truman, along with two destroyers and a cruiser in its strike group, is in the Red Sea.

The officials spoke on May 2 with condition of anonymity to discuss military operations.

The U.S. has increased its attacks on the Houthis, launching daily strikes since March 15, when President Donald Trump ordered a new, expanded campaign. He promised to use "overwhelming lethal force" until the Houthis stop their attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, a vital trade corridor.

According to Central Command, the U.S. has been waging an "intense and sustained campaign" against the Houthis. In a statement, the command said the U.S. has struck more than 1,000 targets in Yemen since Operation Rough Rider began. It hasn't provided details on the targets or how the data is compiled.

It has been rare in recent years for the U.S. to have two aircraft carriers in the Middle East at the same time. Navy leaders have generally been opposed to the idea because it disrupts ship maintenance schedules and delays time at home for sailors strained by the unusually high combat tempo.

If there are no additional extensions and the Truman and its warships leave the region, those sailors could be back home by next month.

Last year, the Biden administration ordered the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier to remain in the Red Sea for an extended time as U.S. warships waged the most intense running sea battle since World War II.

Prior to that, it had been years since the U.S. had committed that much warship power to the Middle East.

The Houthis had been waging persistent missile and drone attacks against commercial and military ships in the region in what the group's leadership has described as an effort to end Israel's war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

From November 2023 until this January, the Houthis targeted more than 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones, sinking two of them and killing four sailors. That has greatly reduced the flow of trade through the Red Sea corridor, which typically sees $1 trillion of goods move through it annually.

The group paused attacks in a self-imposed ceasefire until the U.S. launched a broad assault against the rebels in mid-March.

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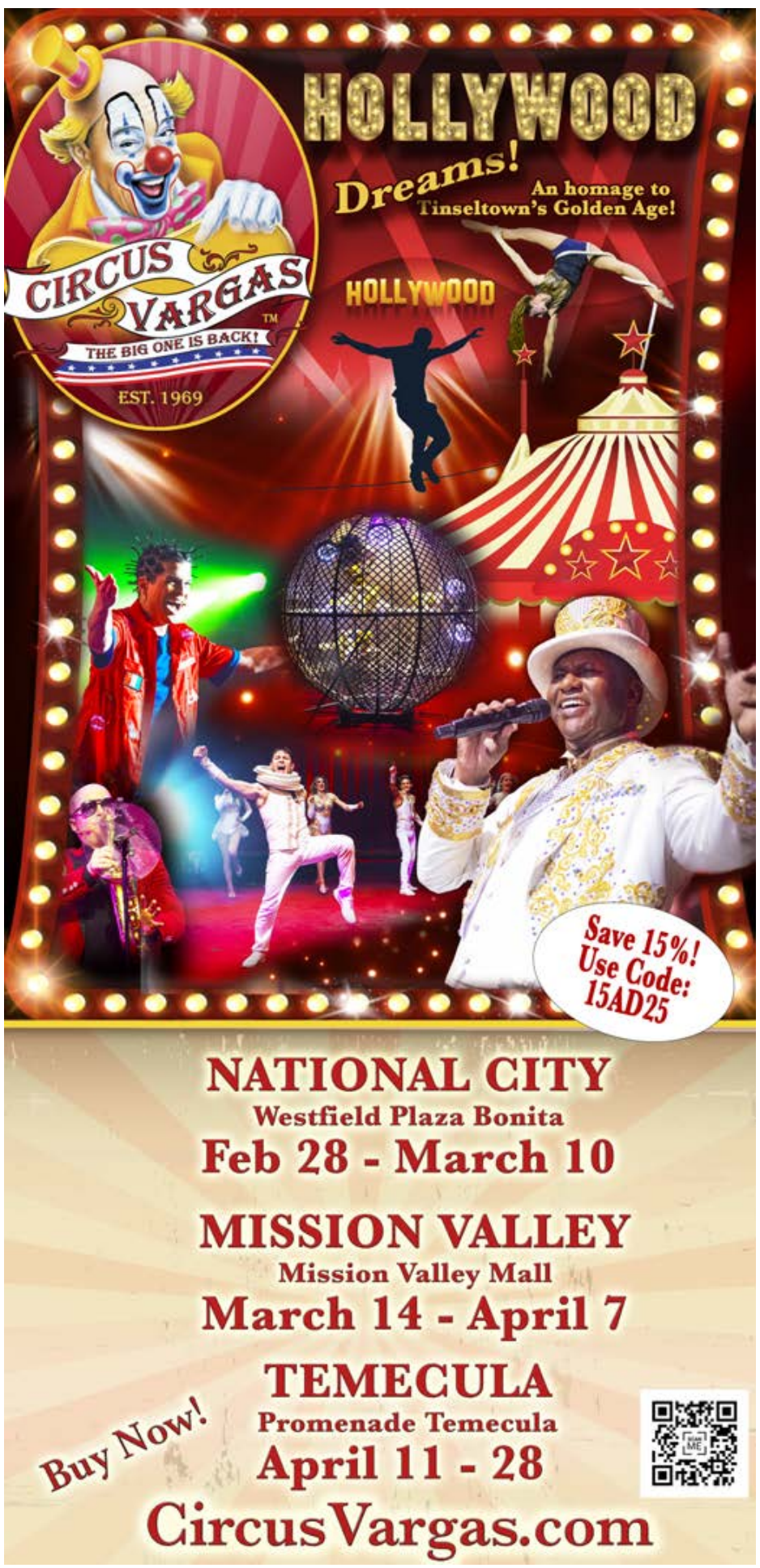

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SPORTS

Weeks after fall, jockey Junior Alvarado rebounds to win a muddy Kentucky Derby aboard Sovereignty

Associated Press

Temporarily sidelined by a hard fall, jockey Junior Alvarado put it behind him with the ride of a lifetime in the Kentucky Derby.

Most satisfying was guiding Sovereignty past other horses in the slop before drawing a bead on 3-1 favorite Journalism and chasing him down to win the 151st running at Churchill Downs by 1 1/2 lengths. The effort left Alvarado and his mount caked in mud, worn proudly along with the garland of red roses that was draped over the winner.

"Still sinking in, to be honest," the 38-year-old Venezuelan rider said of his breakthrough, which came in his ninth try. "It means the world to me, for me and my family. Coming from my country where the only race we would be able to watch back there was just the Kentucky Derby.

"I said that would be nice to be in the United States and ride in the Kentucky Derby. Little by little I started to point that out to be, to make it come true. Today, we did just that."

Alvarado's Derby win highlights a career of Grade 1 triumphs, many on some of horse racing's biggest stages. He earned a Triple Crown win in the 2021 Preakness on Rombauer, has a handful of Breeders' Cup championships and won the $3 million Pegasus World Cup Invitational two years ago aboard Bill Mott-trained Art Collector at Gulfstream Park in Florida.

This impressive performance came after Alvarado fractured his shoulder in a March 23 fall at Gulfstream after his horse had a heart attack. He returned to racing three weeks later at Keeneland and won a couple of claiming races at Churchill Downs this week — including another fall on Thursday — before bouncing back with a signature ride.

Riding Sovereignty was never in question despite the injury. He missed the Grade 1 Florida Derby on March 29 — where Manny Franco rode the bay colt to a second-place finish behind Tappan Street — but Mott, the Hall of Fame trainer, reiterated that as long as Alvarado was healthy, the horse he rode to two graded stakes wins on the Derby trail awaited him.

"It gave me peace of mind," the jockey added.

The next step was clearing several obstacles as the 7-1 third betting choice coming out of the gate.

For starters, clipping heels with a competitor as the 19-horse field passed the grandstand the first time. There was concern that Sovereignty might lose a shoe from the contact. Then, making sure he didn't lose too much ground while rounding the turns.

"When we turned to the backside, he was still traveling very beautifully until we hit the five(-eighths) pole," Alvarado said. "That's when he kind of said to me, 'I'm ready.'"

Alvarado steered Sovereignty into contention along with Journalism entering the stretch before finally clearing him in the stretch. The finish earned firsts for Dubai-based stable Godolphin, an outright win for Mott after getting the 2019 Derby via disqualification and vindication for Alvarado after a scary setback.

"Junior did a terrific job of getting him over," Mott said. "Fortunately, there was a lot of speed in the race. It set up well for us because they had an honest pace. … He tipped him out and got him in a spot that he was going to be clear down the backside."

Jockey Junior Alvarado celebrates after riding Sovereignty to victory in the 151st running of the Kentucky Derby horse race at Churchill Downs Saturday, May 3, 2025, in Louisville, Ky. *AP Photo/Brynn Anderson.*

Mateo Villanueva pitches against Madison High School on April 21. The Islanders beat Madison 4-0. *Photos by Kelly Moore.*

Coronado High School baseball team beats Madison

Cable Fledderjohn gets on base in the April 21 game against Madison High School.

Patch Moore goes up to bat against Madison, his fellow teammates watching from the dugout.

USA Volleyball tabs 3-time Olympic medalist April Ross to head beach coach with LA Games looming

Associated Press

USA Volleyball has named three-time Olympic medalist April Ross as head of coaching for the beach national teams, turning to one of the country's most successful beach volleyball players after the Americans had their first-ever medal shutout in Paris.

The national governing body said the southern California native will work to improve the performance of "our top American athletes on the international stage" as it looks ahead to hosting the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

"I'm honored to join USA Volleyball in this new role and look forward to working with our coaches and athletes to continue the legacy of success on the international stage," Ross said. "I've always believed in the power of collaboration, and I'm excited to be part of a team that shares that vision."

Ross, 42, won a silver medal in London, a bronze in Rio de Janeiro and a gold medal in Tokyo — with three different partners; she also won back-to-back NCAA indoor volleyball titles at Southern California.

"April brings a unique combination of elite-level experience, deep technical knowledge, and a passion for mentoring," said Sean Scott, director of beach national teams. "She's competed at the highest levels and understands what it takes to succeed. I'm excited to work alongside her as we continue to build a world-class coaching culture that supports our athletes' growth and prepares them to win at the highest level."

April Ross, of the United States, dives for the ball during a women's beach volleyball Gold Medal match against Australia at the 2020 Summer Olympics, Friday, Aug. 6, 2021, in Tokyo, Japan. *AP Photo/Felipe Dana, File.*

The Americans dominated beach volleyball after the sport that was conceived on the coasts of Hawaii and California was added to the Olympic program in 1996, winning seven of the first 14 Olympic gold medals. But the haul has sputtered as the generation that included Ross and three-time gold medalists Misty May-Treanor and Kerri Walsh Jennings aged out.

The U.S. women failed to medal in Paris for the first time since 2000; the American men have not medaled at all since 2008.

USA Volleyball said Ross will be based at the beach volleyball training center in Torrance, California, and work to improve the quality of coaching and training at all levels of the national team program.

"April's leadership and dedication to the sport are unmatched, and we are thrilled to have her in this new role," USA Volleyball President and CEO John Speraw said. "She is a true champion and a mentor who understands the value of collaboration and developing the next generation of elite athletes. We are confident that her expertise will continue to elevate U.S. Beach Volleyball on the global stage, especially as we look ahead to LA 2028."

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SPORTS

San Diego Padres' Fernando Tatis Jr., center, is checked by a trainer, front right, and manager Mike Shildt, left, after being hit by a pitch from Pittsburgh Pirates' Mitch Keller during the third inning of a baseball game in Pittsburgh, Friday, May 2, 2025. *AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar.*

Padres star Fernando Tatis Jr. is back in the lineup a day after taking a fastball to the forearm

Associated Press

San Diego Padres outfielder Fernando Tatis Jr. was in the lineup for the May 3 game against Pittsburgh, less than 24 hours after taking a pitch on the forearm.

Tatis exited San Diego's 9-4 victory over the Pirates on May 2 in the third inning after getting drilled in the left forearm on a 93 mph sinker from Pittsburgh starter Mitch Keller.

Padres manager Mike Shildt said that X-rays on Tatis were negative. While Tatis will be dealing with some soreness, the swelling from the contusion had dissipated and he was cleared to play. Tatis, who is hitting .345 with eight homers and 25 RBIs so far this season, was batting leadoff against Pittsburgh's Bailey Falter.

San Diego did make a couple of roster moves on May 3, calling up catcher Luis Campasano from Triple-A El Paso while sending down utility player Connor Joe in hopes that Joe can get more regular at-bats.

Olympic swim great Gary Hall Jr awarded 10 medals to replace those destroyed in LA fires

Associated Press

After all his Olympic medals were destroyed in the Los Angeles fires, swimming great Gary Hall Jr. set an unexpected record replacing them at IOC headquarters on May 5.

Ten Olympic medals awarded to one athlete on the same day.

"I'll do a better job of taking care of these," Hall Jr. quipped receiving the new set of five golds, three silvers and two bronzes earned swimming for the United States at three Summer Games from 1996 to 2004.

The originals burned four months ago at his home in the Pacific Palisades area of the city that will host the next Summer Games in 2028.

Replacing them by presenting 10 at the same time was "a unique ceremony," said International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach.

"I don't think that it happened ever before and I hope it will never have to happen again," Bach told Hall Jr. "We hope also to give you a moment of relief and joy which will help you now in the further process to get over what you had to go through with this tragedy."

Hall Jr. spoke with emotion about being supported by family, former teammates and old Olympic rivals like Australia stars Ian Thorpe and Michael Klim.

"Having friends and family I am a very lucky man," he said. "The support that I was offered from the athletic community has buoyed me through the darkest of nights."

He brought with him to Switzerland a deformed gold medal later recovered from the home he fled with his dog, Puddles, after grabbing his insulin medication.

"It's got some character," Hall Jr. said of the burned gold at the Olympic ceremony. "The value of friends outweighs the value of objects. We live in a time of capitalism, consumerism and you realize when you lose everything, how little of it you truly need.

"Character cannot be taken away, it cannot be burned and it cannot be lost."

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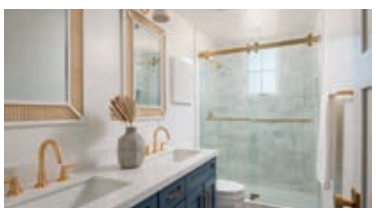

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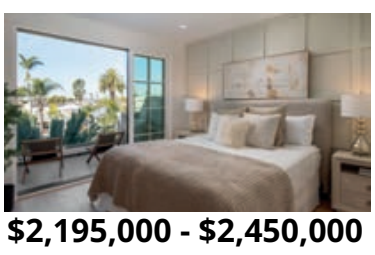

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