NATION & WORLD

BRIEFS
FROM WIRE REPORTS

Police investigate two burned at Ohio fraternity

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Police are investigating whether two Ohio State University students who were treated for deep burns after being engulfed in flames at an outdoor fraternity party were victims of hazing.

The university placed the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity on interim suspension after a video circulated on social media showing a large group surrounding two young men on fire Saturday. A student who watched the video called police the next day to report a possible hazing incident, according to an audio recording of the call.

"They stood around watching while this kid just burned," said the student, who was sent the video in a group chat with her sorority members.

The video shows a ring of people standing outside, many wearing the school's red and white colors, laughing and shouting at two men on the ground with their pants on fire. One lunges at the other, and they both roll on the ground. The shouting takes on a more panicked tone as they struggle to remove their clothing. One onlooker holds a small fire extinguisher but doesn't successfully deploy it.

According to the Columbus Police report, the victims were both students who were treated for "moderate" second- and third-degree burns. The university has not said how the fraternity is linked to the event, but the report lists the president of the fraternity as part of the investigation.

Brand sentenced to 10½ years in prison

LONDON – Russell Brand was sentenced Monday to 10½ years in prison for raping one woman and sexually assaulting three others at a time when his bawdy behavior was indulged and celebrated during his rise to stardom.

Judge Joel Bennathan denounced Brand's "casual and arrogant disregard" for any woman who said no to him, and castigated him for the series of lies he told in testimony denying assaults that dated back to 2004.

"About 20 years ago, Russell Brand, you were becoming famous," Bennathan said. "You were clever — and in many people's eyes, funny and charismatic. You had also become a sexual predator."

Brand showed little emotion during the stinging rebuke. He turned to mouth the words "we'll be OK" to his wife after he stood up and was led away by court officers after the hearing.

The 51-year-old actor-comedian, known for outrageous stand-up routines and provocative behavior on television and radio broadcasts, as well as battles with drugs and alcohol, had maintained his innocence and testified that all his encounters were consensual.

Four grizzly bears linked by DNA to deadly attack

VANCOUVER, British Columbia – Four grizzly bears captured in western Canada were responsible for killing a mother and her adult daughter this month in what investigators believe was a rare predatory attack, wildlife officials said Tuesday.

DNA tests conclusively linked a female grizzly and her three yearling cubs to the deaths of Jenny Balcarras, 48, and her 20-year-old daughter, Selah Reed, the British Columbia Conservation Officer Service said. All four bears were killed to protect the public.

"Our investigation also found that this attack likely involved predatory behavior, which I can tell you is very rare," Inspector Jeff Tyre told an online briefing.

"That is to say, we don't know how it started, but we know how it ended."

The women's remains were found about 490 feet apart near a trail outside Bella Coola, a remote community about 620 miles north of Vancouver.

Family members raised the alarm after Reed missed a routine Saturday night call with her sister. Searchers found her mother's remains first, then discovered Reed's remains in a bear cache, where bears store food.



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO BY NATHAN HOWARD

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth speaks Tuesday during a news conference at the Pentagon in Washington.

House blocks effort to impeach Hegseth

Republican lawmakers largely stand with defense secretary

BY KONSTANTIN TOROPIN, BEN FINLEY and JOEY CAPPELLETTI
Associated Press

WASHINGTON – The House on Tuesday turned aside a resolution to impeach Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, halting an effort to remove the Pentagon chief for his conduct in office and his handling of the war in Iran.

The vote came as Republicans grapple with the fallout from sweeping midterm losses that some in the party have blamed on the war in Iran and the resulting surge in gas prices. But after President Donald Trump signaled strong support for Hegseth, GOP lawmakers largely stood by the secretary Tuesday, blocking the effort in a near party-line vote.

The effort was led by Kentucky Republican Rep. Thomas Massie and backed by Democrats. The vote Tuesday may only delay an impeachment push against Hegseth, with Democrats set to take control of the House and Senate in January.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries, who is expected to become the next speaker when Democrats take charge in January, stood firmly behind the push, saying Hegseth has "abused his power" and "undermined America's national security."

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer endorsed Hegseth's impeachment as well.

Hegseth rebuked the effort Tuesday in his first news conference in months, portraying Massie as a rogue lawmaker and arguing he had committed none of the high crimes required in the Constitution for his removal. He framed the effort as an indictment against the nation's service members and their successes and said it was undermining American forces "in real time."

"This is not patriotism," Hegseth said. "This is sabotage."

Massie's resolution included eight counts of impeachment. It largely focused on the war in Iran but also included references to Hegseth's role in carrying out military actions in Yemen and Venezuela.

Massie, a Kentucky Republican who is leaving Congress in January after losing his primary to a Trump-backed opponent, says Hegseth has "knowingly executed and implemented unlawful orders."

Tuesday morning, Hegseth gave a defiant and politicized defense of his stewardship of the U.S. military in his first news conference at the Pentagon in six months. He chose to hit back at the rising bipartisan anger over battlefield strategy while offering few details about intermittent operations against Iran or fatal strikes on alleged drug-smuggling boats in Latin America.

Hegseth said the impeachment resolution "tells our enemies — Iran, the cartels, every adversary watching — the United States will actually punish its own warriors and its own civilian leadership for successfully executing lawful military operations."

Trump praised Hegseth's performance at the briefing in a social media post, while Vice President JD Vance said in his own post that the impeachment effort is "a ridiculous show that stands in for actual policymaking."

Trump celebrated the House vote later Tuesday, saying on social media that it was the exoneration of "a Great American Patriot."

Massie filed the resolution in the House on Monday as lawmakers returned to Washington. Tuesday's vote was a procedural attempt to stop the impeachment push outright by sending the matter back to committee. The motion succeeded 211-204, with a number of Democrats missing the vote.

Massie's resolution had eight counts of impeachment that focused on U.S. military actions or changes on Hegseth's watch. They include reported reductions in staff and resources at a Pentagon office focused on mitigating civilian harm, which preceded a U.S. missile striking an Iranian primary school during the war, killing up to 168 people.

"The law requires our military to withdraw from hostilities within 60 days if Congress does not authorize the activity," Massie wrote on social media Tuesday. The Iran war "has been underway for 256 days. Congress has not authorized it. Hegseth is breaking the law."

Judge jails Thomas Markle after he cut off his ankle monitor

Man is estranged father of Meghan, Duchess of Sussex

BY ED WHITE and SAFIYAH RIDDLE
Associated Press

The 82-year-old estranged father of Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, was ordered to jail Tuesday because he removed an electronic monitoring device from his ankle, just days after he was charged with possession of child sexual abuse material.

Thomas Markle was arrested and appeared in federal court in Tampa, Florida, after authorities learned he had cut off the device at 1:45 a.m., First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli said.

"Release conditions are court orders, not suggestions," Essayli said.

Markle's arrest on Friday in Lakeland, Florida, followed the seizure of approximately 78 items from storage units in the Los Angeles area, including slides, film negatives and books that contained suspected child sexual abuse images, said Essayli, a federal prosecutor in California.

Markle was living in a senior care center at the time. But U.S. Magistrate Judge Lindsay Griffin agreed Tuesday that Markle now must be kept in custody. Authorities have not said where he will be held while his case remains in court ahead of a likely transfer to California.

In her written order, Griffin noted Markle's "housing situation" had become "untenable," but did not elaborate. Defense attorney Mary Claire Wolf wanted to keep him out of custody but has not found a suitable place for Markle to stay, according to a hearing summary.

Essayli told The Associated Press he didn't know why the ankle device was removed. It also wasn't clear where it occurred. An email and phone message seeking comment from Wolf were not immediately returned.

Still pending, besides the charges: a mental competency exam for Markle.

He had a stroke earlier this year while living in the Philippines and had to have his left leg amputated. That forced him to return to the U.S.

The Sun, a British tabloid newspaper, reported that Meghan's half brother found a collection of child sexual abuse images while clearing out their father's home in the Philippines. That discovery led to information about the two U.S. storage units in California, which Markle had rented since 2008.

Markle's daughter, Meghan, married Prince Harry at Windsor Castle in 2018. They have two children, Prince Archie and Princess Lilibet. She is an American citizen and an actor who starred in the U.S. television drama "Suits."

U.S. charges 3 with plotting attacks in U.S. and Europe

Allegations include planned assault on U.K. airbase

BY LARRY NEUMEISTER and ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

NEW YORK – Three men, including one already jailed in the United States, were accused by U.S. authorities Tuesday of being Iran-supported operatives who plotted nearly 20 attacks on Jewish communities in Europe and the U.S. as well as a planned assault on a British air base used by the U.S. Air Force.

Charges against Mohammad Baqer Saad Dawood al-Saadi, a dual Iranian-Iraqi national; Mohsen Mohajeri, an Iranian national; and Mohammad Ali al-Hassani, an Iraqi national, were outlined in a superseding indictment unsealed in Manhattan federal court. Only al-Saadi is in custody.

U.S. Attorney Jamie McDonald in New York said in a news release that al-Saadi, who was arrested in the spring, continued to coordinate with his co-defendants in the days leading up to the attempted September terrorist plot at a British Royal Air Force Base in Fairford, United Kingdom, where U.S. bombers and troops had been stationed.

"These defendants helped orchestrate a campaign of terror on behalf of terrorist organizations affiliated with Iran that targeted Jewish communities in Europe and the United States, and the British military base, RAF Fairford, housing American service members," McDonald said. "The threat presented by Iran and Iran-backed terrorist groups to America and our allies is not hypothetical — it is very real."

Attorney General Todd Blanche said: "Anyone who plans a terrorist plot on a military base housing American service members will be prosecuted by the United States government."

The new indictment offers fresh insight into an episode that has been shrouded in mystery for more than a month after five men were detained after midnight on Sept. 27 on suspected explosives and terrorism offenses after three suspicious vans were spotted traveling toward the base in western England.

A sixth suspect, a British-Iranian dual national, was arrested several days later. All the men were released on bail.

British authorities linked the incident to Tehran, and though Iran denied involvement, the arrests prompted the U.S. to withdraw its bombers that had been stationed there. The bombers were redeployed to their home bases in the United States.

RAF Fairford, located 100 miles west of London, has been used by American bombers during decades of conflicts in the Middle East.

According to the indictment, al-Saadi used coded language in communications with relatives from jail to direct that money be passed along to others who could carry out attacks.

The indictment alleged that the three men conspired together to use a network of contacts in the United Kingdom to commit terrorist attacks on behalf of an Iran-aligned terrorist network, which included the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Kata'ib Hizballah.

In June, al-Saadi pleaded not guilty to charges that he plotted at least 18 attacks in Europe in retaliation for the U.S. and Israel's war with Iran. He called himself a "prisoner of war." He has been held without bail since. His lawyers did not immediately respond to requests for comment Tuesday on the latest development.

Both Kata'ib Hizballah and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps have been designated by the U.S. government as foreign terrorist organizations. U.S. prosecutors say al-Saadi was a Kata'ib Hizballah commander.

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St. Tammany Bureau (NEWS only): 321 New Hampshire St., Covington, LA 70433 • 985-276-5054